

LONDON THE READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[FEBRUARY 1, 1872]

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No. 455.—VOL. XVIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 20, 1872.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE SERENADE]

THE GIPSY'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER I.

I stood with fire in every vein;
My pulses beat with frenzied stroke;
I breathed with that short, heaving strain
Which teaches what it is to choke.
A moment, and then came a chill,
A stagnant, icy chill, as though
The blood recoiled, afraid to fill
A heart made weak with such a blow.

Eliza Cook.

It was a gloomy night, a great many years ago, when the adventures we are about to narrate began. The opening scene of our present story lies in sunny Spain among the great forests at the base of the Tarragona Hills, west of the mountains, and not far from the small town of Mora.

The river Ebro rises in the hills far away above, and, coursing south-easterly, empties itself into the Mediterranean on the eastern coast of Spain, between Cape Tortosa and San Carlos—the great island of Buda lying opposite the mouth of this beautiful river.

The large town of Tortosa, near the sea coast, stands at the eastern base of these mountains, fronting the Mediterranean, and is now a place of considerable wealth and importance, where there dwelt a few of the older Castilian families, of aristocratic birth and fortune, long since broken up, however, and now unknown, except in the history of the past.

Two or three miles distant from this little town of Mora, near the banks of the Ebro, there were encamped in the forest, on the night our story opens, a small party of Spanish gipsies. They had been in that immediate vicinity a day or two, and from their habits and costume appeared to rank among the first and leading class in their profession, which in those days was not deemed of the vagabond character into which it declined in later years.

The attire of the women was tasteful and clean, while that of the men, though rather leaning to that of the bandit of the period, was attractive, and, in one or two instances, costly.

The chief, or captain of the band, was especially marked by the characteristics of his race. He was a dark-eyed, tall, muscular, stalwart fellow, apparently twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age. His form was finely developed, and he had been remarkable, from his earliest years, as a horseman, athlete, and gymnast. He was wonderfully accomplished in the arts of legerdemain, and in the skilled use of the short-sword or rapier he had no superior. His courage and daring equalled his physical abilities, and he had become thoroughly inured to the hazards and perils of his roving and romantic life to which he was born and in which he had been reared.

A splendid fellow, indeed, in physique was Pietro Ilphonso; but he possessed little knowledge or appreciation of ordinary morality or principle. He was sensuous and selfish, but determined in the pursuit of any object upon which he set his mind or heart. He halted at no obstacles, shunned no dangers or responsibility, regarded no toil or hardship which was necessary to carry his point or gain his end. He was lord of his clan, leader, chieftain, ruler; and, while he strictly accorded to his associates the most constant devotion, he required at their hands, at all times, under all circumstances of life or death, the utmost fealty to the terrible oath of allegiance then current among the race. And in the observance of the obligations of this oath he was no less faithful and earnest than were his associates.

In music he was a proficient, and naturally possessed a tenor voice of exquisite sweetness and scope, and his leisure hours were frequently devoted to this innocent and attractive amusement.

He was now present in the forest beyond Mora, with a few of his tried and trustiest followers, by appointment. He had in hand an undertaking of more than ordinary magnitude in its results, and bearing upon his own fate—in which he was resolved to succeed, after years of devotion to its accomplishment—and in which were involved also the peace, the fortune, and the reputation of a lady who towered far above him in rank, birth, wealth, and character—

of whom he had become enamoured some years previously, and who had loved him not wisely but too well—alas! without the slightest knowledge of his true character.

Two hours after nightfall, attired in the ordinary dress of the wandering minstrel of those days (and he was cunning in disguises), he sallied forth alone from the silent camp, throwing over his shoulders a long Spanish cloak, under which he wore a light rapier and concealed his guitar.

He moved down the banks of the beautiful Ebro, amid the darkness, unnoticed and unmolested, and wended his way to the outskirts of Tortosa, with which he was evidently acquainted, for he selected the unfrequented ways, as he moved on leisurely until he reached the rear of a superb villa or chateau, beneath the deep shadow of which he halted.

This old mansion was a magnificent stone structure, with broad colonnades extending round its spacious courts—elegant and classical in proportions and architecture, and surrounded outside with groups of statuary and other expensive and massive ornamentation.

It was the home-estate of the then renowned and aristocratic Spanish Don Sebastian Perillo, in whose honour the immediately neighbouring town had been named.

Perillo had a queenly daughter, upon whom he had lavished his fortune, and she had been known for years in the region where they dwelt as a splendid specimen of Castilian beauty, as proud and haughty as she was rich, talented, and lovely.

The heads of half the younger men among the gentry and nobility had been turned by the ravishing charms and blandishments of this rare pattern of female excellence.

But beautiful Una Perillo turned a deaf ear to all their advances and protestations, and would consent to give up her freedom to the keeping of none of the numerous admirers of the belle of society in aristocratic Tortosa, though she was now twenty-four years old.

Una had her secret, and she kept it.

On the night described she sat in her beautifully appointed boudoir, musing. The hour was late.

She had entertained a party of gallants at her father's mansion that evening, and had now retired to the quiet of her own private apartment, where she reclined upon a sumptuous divan near the open casement, and gazed forth, in meditative mood, upon the glittering stars.

Suddenly the silence of midnight was broken, and a slight movement upon the terrace beyond her window startled her from the reverie into which she had fallen.

She saw a dark figure glide across the lawn, then she observed that it halted beneath the shadow of a sculptured group.

The intruder looked up, and cautiously gazed round the court and garden. No one was within sight or sound, and the stranger seemed to be disappointed. He gazed up at the open casement, but he could discover nothing there, save the shadowed cornices and dark walls of the stately mansion. There were now no lights in the house, and its inmates had evidently gone to rest.

The minstrel sat for a few minutes in silence, when he slipped from beneath his cloak a guitar, which he softly tuned, then, accompanying his exquisite voice, he murmured forth, in gentle but pleasing cadence, his tender minstrel's lay, to which the loving Una had more than once before been a willing and enraptured listener:

"Born in the dark woods lonely fall,
Where echoes round and tenderly curled
Round the lowest, like hermit's cell.
The deep, brown forest was my world.
Ah, what a joy it gave my heart!
Wild as the woodbine up I grew;
Soon in brave deeds I bore a part,
And counted off the game I slew!
Time—while so low my lot was cast,
Through wilds and forests still I range—
My joys shall pomp and pride outlast,
For voice of Nature cannot change."

Una knew those tender tones full well, indeed—and she had looked for the coming of the "wandering minstrel," but not so soon by several days. She had secretly summoned and arranged to meet him, for she had a matter of weighty import about which she desired to confer with him.

It would have been less perilous to have communicated with him—as she had intended to do—away from the vicinity of her father's house. But, there he was, in the garden. She knew the voice, and remembered the plaintive "Lay of the Forester," which he had just now partially delivered, in the same tender tones she had heard before.

What could she do?

After a few minutes' silence she leaned forth from the casement, and, in a sharp whisper, murmured:

"Pietro! Is it you?"
The minstrel quickly caught the sound of Una's words, and answered with his accompanying guitar:

"Yes, 'tis he, love, 'tis he!
From the distant dozing sea;
And he's come, love, he's come
To the proud and lordly home
Of the darling of his youth;
Whose ripe beauty, and whose truth
Draw him back—what'er betide—
To his charming lover's side!"

Pietro had no idea, as yet, what was the cause of the friendly summons he had lately received from Una to attend her forthwith, and he was destined to be astounded with the intelligence she had to offer him; but, since he had come, she could not defer the communication of it for a moment, under the circumstances. So she said, in another whisper:

"Retire, Pietro, to the rear of the south garden beneath the inner row of lime-trees; I will join you there at once."

The darkly attired stranger disappeared with emotions of inward gratification, which, even in the midst of that sombre shadow, lighted up his handsome countenance.

Ten minutes afterwards, a superbly rounded female figure, in sable attire from head to foot, emerged from the portal of the great mansion, and in silence moved stealthily down to the rear of the garden, and glided unnoticed beneath the lime-trees indicated.

It was Una Perillo—the magnificent but passionate daughter of the old Don, who dwelt in the grand villa described, but he had little thought that his splendid daughter—of whom he was so proud and so chary—was, at midnight, participating in a clandestine interview with a roving gypsy and mountebank, within sight and sound of the very apartment where the lordly old gentleman was at that moment sound asleep, dreaming of anything else on earth save such an improbable proceeding.

Una was wrapped in a black silk Spanish manto, fastened around the waist, the heavy folds of which were thrown up over her shoulders and head, and

clutched by the sides in such a manner as to conceal the whole of the upper part of her form and head except her great, dark, flashing eyes, which were full of excitement as she hurriedly but stealthily passed up the walk beneath the dark shadows of lime-trees.

An arm fell on her shoulder, and the next instant she found herself in the close and fervent embrace of her daring and impetuous lover, who whispered, tenderly, as his lips sought her glowing cheek unsuccessfully:

"Darling Una, this is joy, indeed!"

She gently pushed aside his hand, and demanded, in a low, fierce tone that astonished Pietro beyond measure:

"Where is the child, Pietro?"

"The child? Who, darling?"

"The boy!" said Una, excitedly. "My son and yours—of whom I consented to give you the charge."

"Safe, Una—just where he has been for nearly five years past—at the convent."

"Is he alive?" almost screamed Una, desperately.

"Alive? Of course he is, and well when I last heard from him," added Pietro, doubtfully.

"When was that?" demanded Una.

"Two months since—certainly not more."

"Where?" asked the woman.

"At Torrejos, near Toledo."

"He is not there, Pietro Iphonso!"

"No?" exclaimed Pietro, amazed.

"Gone!" replied Una, desperately.

"Gone?" queried the gipsy, wildly starting from her. "Gone, Una? How—when—whither?"

"Stolen—abducted—murdered, for aught I know," said Una, in terrible excitement. "Since you seem to know nothing of this act, who should?"

"How did you hear of this?"

"I was there in person," said Una.

"You?" wondered Pietro, for he had not truly told her where the boy was.

"Yes, Pietro. And this was not my first visit there by many," continued the beautiful woman.

"How knew you of his whereabouts?"

"It does not matter now he is gone. If you know nothing of this dastardly theft, who does, Pietro?"

The gipsy could make no answer. He was utterly at a loss to comprehend this singular intelligence, which not only astounded but alarmed and grieved as well as angered him.

"I will take the heart out of that miserable monk's breast," exclaimed Pietro, enraged. "If he do not quickly account to me for his neglect, or crime, or both combined. Now I hasten to get at the bottom of this mystery, Una."

"Oh, Pietro!" exclaimed Una, in her anguish, "lose no time and spare no cost to recover the boy."

"Rely on me, Una—I will leave no stone unturned to recover him and punish the guilty perpetrator of this foul wrong as well. This then accounts for your late peremptory summons, Una."

"Yes," said the offended and proud young mother. "You must find him, Pietro, or never seek my face again. I placed him in your charge. Go!"

With these words Una tore herself from Pietro's arms, flew away up the shadowed walks to the rear of the mansion, and disappeared.

Pietro did not linger. He hastened back to the gipsy camp, and instantly ordered a march; and, before daybreak, the little band of rovers were some miles distant from More, on the way towards Toledo, with Pietro in the advance.

CHAPTER II.

And were not as good a deed as drink to break the pate of thee I am a very villain. Henry IV.

SOME eight years prior to this scene, Una Perillo, then the blooming and accomplished daughter of old Don Sebastian—connected by marriage with the noted Montrais of France—one of the richest and proudest of Spain's wealthy and haughty sons—had for more than two years been intimately, though secretly, the associate of Pietro Iphonso, whom she had met, at first casually, at a masked ball, and he had subsequently followed up the conquest he there made with fatal success.

She did not know him. He appeared to her originally as a cavalier, and his polished manners, handsome form, and winning ways captivated her heart. He swore eternal constancy, and really loved the splendid girl with his whole soul, but he deceived her from the outset.

He talked of his family, his birth, his expectations, his rank, his honour, his devotion—and she trusted him. He told her he was then under the ban of political censure only, that he had been banished from court temporarily, and from his friends, and was compelled for the time to wander an exile in disguise; but that the cloud that lowered over him and his house would one day be lifted, and he could then announce his real name and position, which he declared was the equal of her own in wealth and social

elevation; she believed all this, and in return she loved him with her whole heart.

He was false! But he won fair Una, and for more than a year they met clandestinely. A secret marriage was at length contrived through the cunning of Pietro, and, a year after, Una left her father's house, and retired to a quiet village a few miles from Toledo, where she gave birth to a boy.

Upon recovering her health she returned to her father's house, and Pietro disappeared from public view altogether, though the lovers had made arrangements secretly whereby they could and did occasionally thereafter communicate with and see each other from time to time.

But Pietro Iphonso was a gipsy and an adventurer. Old Don Sebastian wedded a Montrais, of Paris. He constantly furnished his only daughter with a most generous allowance, which he never sought to know how she used, the bulk of which was paid to Pietro for years, and with it he managed to take good care of himself and the child, as Una knew.

When the boy came to be three years old she put him in sole charge of this man, who had so long and so successfully deceived her; and though she was passionately fond of the child, she deemed it best to permit the father to look after and educate him, his existence never from the outset having been suspected by her aristocratic family.

Into the custody of the scoundrel priest who had performed the marriage ceremony this boy had been placed, near Toledo, and there he grew to be seven years old, when suddenly he was missed from the dwelling of the pretended monk, and Una, who had gone thither, as she frequently did, to see her child, first heard that the boy had two weeks before been stolen away from this impostor's keeping.

He had grown to be a promising child, and the well-paid services of the pretended monk had been devoted to his careful mental and bodily training, for his tutor was an Italian of rare skill and learning, though a finished rogue and knave.

At a very early age the boy evinced uncommon natural talents, and at seven years old he appeared in size, muscle, and physical development generally three years older—so stout and tall and strong was he for his age, and all his precociousness had been encouraged.

Pietro, the father, stole his son, and saw with pride and satisfaction how rapidly he grew in strength, agility, and comeliness, as well as stature.

When the news of his sudden abduction was communicated to him by Una it fell upon his ear with a stunning crash, and he started off for the dwelling of the scoundrel or villainous monk with hastened strides, but with a troubled heart.

He suspected the scoundrel—"Padre Fineja," as he was called—from the outset. This man was subtle and cunning, but Pietro thought he knew enough of his history to trust him, for he had it in his power to send him to the galleys any day when he chose to denounce him. Fineja knew this too, but he had Pietro's secret, and for Una's sake the gipsy kept his own counsel.

He entrusted the keeping and education of his brave boy to this villain, confidently believing that he would find it to his advantage to look after, instruct, and protect him. Now the boy had suddenly been stolen.

"Stolen by whom? For what purpose?" queried Pietro as he went.

He could not divine the cause of this mystery. But he hurried on to the dwelling of Padre Fineja; and he would shortly wring from the former rover, cheat, and deceiver, satisfaction, he vowed, or take his worthless life.

In two days from the night when he left Una so abruptly Pietro entered the dwelling of Padre Fineja, who was not looking for the gipsy, and was thus surprised alone.

"Good evening," said the false priest, pleasantly, as Pietro entered, though he observed his excitement. And in reply Pietro, without circumlocution, said:

"Bring the boy, Fineja."

The rasal looked up at the compressed lip of the stalwart gipsy whose ire he feared, and from which he had intended to flee that very night, and was utterly at a loss for a ready reply, though his cunning served him a few minutes afterwards.

"The boy?" said Fineja, flustered and confused.

"That's what I said," rejoined Pietro, in a raised tone; "bring the boy—my son—where is he?"

"I don't know," said Fineja. "I thought you had heard of the misfortune through the Donna Una, probably."

"What misfortune?" demanded Pietro, rising from the seat into which he had dropped on entering the house. "What villainous scheme are you hatching now, Fineja? Where is my boy? What has become of him?"

"I cannot tell," began the pretended monk.

"What have you done with him?" thundered

Pietro Iphonso. "What have you done with that child?"

And he clutched Fineja at the throat with one powerful hand, and, holding the alarmed and struggling victim out at arm's length, was just about to administer a blow with his other clenched fist that would have probably broken the man's skull had it fallen, when he threw him heavily across the room, adding:

"Now, villain, answer. I would not be your murderer, as yet—I do not wish to harm you, even now. But, by Heaven! if you do not explain this plot I will tear your guilty heart out! Speak, monster! What have you done with the boy?"

"Nothing—nothing, Pietro. I do not know where he is. He was stolen from my charge two weeks ago," insisted Fineja.

"You do know, Fineja! You, and you alone, are at the bottom of this plot, to impose upon those whom you know will ransom that child at cost of their fortunes."

"I do not know," began the knave again.

"Stop, miserable trickster!" said Pietro, interrupting the falsifier. "Stop! And listen to what I have to offer you. Give me my boy; restore, or recover him, and I will make you rich—rich, Fineja! If not—"

"How can I restore him?" persisted the thief.

"Find him! Or put me upon his track, I say, or you shall die within the next twelve hours!" shouted Pietro, falling into his seat again, and glaring upon the trembling man with his fiery black eyes, until the villain quailed before his powerful and terribly excited accuser.

He knew Pietro Iphonso! He knew he would not halt at anything to gratify his passions or his vengeance. And from the first he had not intended to risk encountering him at all. Indeed, he had already taken everything out of the house that was portable or valuable, and he had resolved to take himself out, and away, that night—when, to his horror, Pietro had burst in upon him.

Now it was necessary to resort to a ruse to appease the stalwart gipsy, and to get away safely. Once out of the reach of his monster gripe, he would take care that he did not have the opportunity to clutch him at the throat again.

So he said, in a cautious and mysterious way:

"I have my suspicions naturally, Pietro. I do not know anything with certainty. But I have concluded, to-day only, that there is one person who might have a motive to commit this wicked act—"

"Who is it?" quickly demanded Pietro.

"You do not know him," said the priest, "and I am not sure of it, at all. I say I suspect."

"Point him out. I will throttle him at the very altar," said Pietro, fiercely, "if it be necessary; but he shall confess and restore my child!"

"Haste or rashness will not now serve us," replied the cunning scoundrel. "If he is guilty of this thing, he should be punished, but we must be wary in our movements. To-morrow—"

"To-night. Now! This very hour! Join me, and put me upon his track," exclaimed Pietro, insisting upon immediate pursuit.

"Well spoken," said Fineja, "if it were practicable. But it isn't. You will simply scare your game. I say game. I but suspect this man, but patience and management may effect our purpose. I would like to find the boy—quite as well as you would. Do you think I would lose him if I could help it? To-morrow morning, at daybreak, I will seek him where I hope he may be found. Let that suffice. Take you some refreshment and rest. Quiet your excited nerves. And to-morrow join me in the search—in a rational way. We may succeed. I hope so. I think so."

"Be it so. But do not attempt to dupe me, or cheat me farther. If you aid me sincerely, and we recover the boy, your reward shall be ample. If I find you treacherous, I will take your life, mark me! So surely as your name is not Fineja!"

With these words Pietro threw himself on the coarse floor-rug, and, after swallowing some wine, in an hour fell asleep.

The professed priest watched the stalwart and handsome form of the gipsy captain as he lay stretched out upon the rude mat, and saw the heaviness of his evidently troubled breast, but he had no pity for his anguished.

He had been the guilty cause of this man's woe. It was his hand that had brought down this heavy affliction upon the father and mother of the boy he had been entrusted with. He now quietly triumphed and gloated over the misery he had caused, for he hated Pietro because he possessed his infamous secrets, and he had put the boy out of the way because he felt sure that the mother would secretly pay a princely ransom for him.

Pietro slept long. Two hours before daybreak Fineja put into execution the plan which he had in contemplation before Pietro made his unexpected appearance.

The child was safely quartered at a long distance from Toledo. The priest knew where. He had been gone a week or more. The boy was unaware of the intentions of his instructor towards him, but he went whither he was borne. He was too young yet to at all realize his position.

At a late hour in the morning Pietro woke and started up. He had drunk a goblet of wine with the priest foolishly before he slept, and had been drugged.

Fineja had gone; Pietro found himself alone. He sought through the house for the monk. He was not there.

He waited and watched for his return. He did not make his appearance. He went back to the room where he had slept and thought, it all over as calmly as he could, but when he felt how completely he had been duped he took a vow to be avenged on this base ingrate, if it required the balance of his natural life to find and punish him.

As he turned to leave the premises he noticed for the first time that most of the light moveables of the house had been taken away since he had last been there, and they belonged to him. His money had furnished the house.

Then he noticed a half-sheet of paper lying upon the stool he had sat upon the previous night, and he took it up to examine it, but he was not personally gratified to read, in the priest's handwriting, addressed to himself, the following:

"CAPTAIN PIERRO IPHONSO.—When your eye falls upon these lines the writer will be far beyond the reach of your impetuous clutches, looking to the future safety of himself and the boy. You are right, Pietro, I am 'at the bottom of this plot.' Your draught of last night will keep you quiet at least five hours yet. Adios! Repeat!"

"PADRE FINEJA."

This cool and crushing piece of impudence almost paralyzed the unfortunate father for a few moments. He now saw how he had been duped as well as abused, and by a scoundrel he really had had in his power the previous night.

What did he want with the boy? Would he abuse him? neglect him? What would he do with him? Whither had he driven him? or whither had he fled with the child? Would he ever return? Should he ever see the boy again? or him, the inhuman, graceless fiend? All was chaos now.

He recalled the parting words of Una:

"Do not seek my face again until the boy is found!"

He realized what this injunction signified, though he was in no wise at fault for the loss of their child.

He knew not in what direction to turn, for he had no possible clue to the cause of the abduction of the boy by this man—or how he might get upon his track. That he was a cunning scoundrel, and almost as apt in his disguises—when he chose to adopt such deception—as he was himself Pietro was fully aware.

This scheme had evidently been studied out, and the false priest plainly had a motive in the act of more than ordinary import.

Thus to carry out the plot which he had had the audacity even to confess, he was not the man to do it loosely.

Pietro saw no hope of overhauling him.

He went back to his gipsy camp, and the society of his roving companions, for the time being; but, in his heart, he vowed to have full satisfaction out of this scoundrel should they ever meet again on this fair earth!

What explanation could he make to Una? He had no words of comfort for her ears. He had failed to find the boy, and had lost the thief as well—in the midst of his search.

He resolved to accept the terms of her injunction at parting, and determined not to seek her favour again until he could restore the stolen boy!

CHAPTER III.

And if we do but watch the hour
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong. *Byron.*

THE deceitful Fineja carefully disguised himself before leaving the house where he had had the boy in charge so long—and when daybreak came no one who had ever seen this knave at his modest dwelling, in the assumed character of the quiet priest and tutor, would have suspected that the brisk, smartly dressed peasant, who hurried on over the high-road from Toledo towards Tortosa, in such excellent spirits, was the "monk" of but a few hours before. But such was the fact. He had left Pietro, his hitherto patron and benefactor, sound asleep, under the influence of the drugged wine he had induced the gipsy to take; and he knew he would be quiet for a time; and thus he escaped his present vengeance.

For months after this abduction and quarrel Pietro

diligently and persistently sought for the thief and the stolen boy, but without success. At length nearly a year had passed since the child had disappeared. He had grown to be a tall, stout fellow, past eight years old—and looked a dozen years of age. Active, courageous, and haughty in bearing, the image of his finely formed father, young Carlos had come to be rarely accomplished, for his tender years, in all the rudiments of a thorough out-of-door education. He could handle the rapier and broadsword with marvellous skill; in gymnastics he had no equal among the youths who were in years his seniors; he was even now a daring and expert swimmer, and loved the water intensely; he rode the wildest colt as easily as if he were but rocking in his cradle; in many traits of character (child though he yet was) he had no equal among his fellows; and he gave high promise that he would become a wonderful exception to his associates. Proud, courageous, adventurous, and high-strung in all his acts and intercourse with those who came in his way, the handsome and reckless Carlos soon got beyond the control—though he still heard the advice—of his long-time indulgent but skilful and designing tutor, Fineja, who still adhered to the boy's fortunes, with his plot regarding him and his handsome mother as yet in abeyance.

Fineja had contrived to communicate once or twice by letter, secretly, with Donna Una—hinting to her that the writer had knowledge of her early error, and finally giving her to understand that he could serve her, in reference to the recovery of "a treasure" she had missed (as he termed it), upon certain conditions, which he would suggest at the opportune moment, and for liberal compensation.

These two letters were written in a disguised hand, and came into her possession at most unexpected opportunities, when she had no chance to recognize or even see the messengers who delivered them. She thought that Fineja might be at the bottom of this scheme, but she also suspected that Pietro, who had so often deceived her, might have adopted this course towards her for his own selfish purposes, since she had forbidden him her presence, and she now utterly refused to see him until he could account for the absence of their child, who, to her mind, had so mysteriously disappeared.

Fineja was a fine-looking man, and when he chose to play the gallant or cavalier he could personate this character admirably—for he was well educated and accomplished, had travelled widely, knew Europe intimately, and was a first-class linguist, villain though he was. He had his plans, too, in regard to Donna Una—who had so many times visited his quiet dwelling near Toledo in secret to see her son, and this villain had actually become enamoured of her.

He had her secret, and, when he had spirited away the boy, he thought he should be able to be avenged upon Pietro, whom he hated, and be successful with Una.

But he was very cautious, and took his time. He had written to Una and informed her at last that if she had hitherto made no mention of his correspondence to Pietro, and would continue to keep him in ignorance of the facts, at a given time she should be informed of the spot where she might meet and embrace her child again; but that she must come unattended and meet the writer alone. On no other consideration could she see the boy, and every possible avenue had been and would be kept guarded against any surprise in this meeting; while if she played false she would never set eyes on the boy again by any possible chance, for he would then be taken out of Spain for ever.

Centuries ago there stood in the great forest then lying along the easterly range of the Tarragona Hills, at some distance inland, upon a high mass of rocks facing the sea, a large castle, the ruins of which are now shown to the casual visitor in that region, but it must have been originally an enormous and formidable structure, judging from the large area occupied by its colossal remains.

The paths to this immense pile of buildings, or ruins, lead directly up on the one side a hundred feet in height from the bed of the river Ebro, and half a mile in tortuous windings from the margin of the stream, through a mass of tangled vines, brush, and weeds, where formerly, it is said, were walks and some pretensions to gardens.

As the chief road comes near the base of the high rocks upon which the foundation of the old castle stood, it winds about, and at the front of the ruins it descends sharply down to the edge of a deep, yawning ravine, along through the bottom of which dashes by from the hills away back, down past the castle into the Ebro, a roaring stream, narrow, but of great depth.

This stream or torrent has been pouring down over its rocky course from the mountains for ages, and its passage is directly beneath one corner or wing of the castle ruins, over which once stood one of the main

“turrets or towers of the ancient pile. Into this place your guide will introduce his visitors, and its curious characteristics are explained in wondrous accents to the listeners, who now-a-days cluster about him to learn the fearful history of this singular spot.

The structure, at this point, must once have been, on the bottom floor, an immense hall, for the broken columns still remaining, and the numerous pedestals of others, long since gone to decay, show the spacious dimensions of what that apartment seems to have been originally. Between these pedestals there is considerable space, and in one of the broad recesses there is a broken opening, with pieces of the shattered upper strata of wall lying about, which forms the mouth of an immense well, or cistern there, the depth of which is fabulous, but the constant roaring and commotion which go on interminably at the bottom of it render it a frightful and unearthly spot indeed to strangers!

The plunging, dashing, thundering disturbance in the depths of that weird, murmuring, groaning, hissing well had been going on for generations upon generations ere the cause of all this threatening subterranean disturbance could rationally be accounted for, and many and startling are the chronicles related by the different guides who take the tourist of the present day over those vast castle ruins and tell of the wonders of this particular spot.

It is called the “Pool of Death,” the “Well of Blood,” and similar horrible appellations, as the narrator’s fancy elects to denominate it; but, at the best, it is a fearful cavern, and the sounds that boom up from this deep cavity are really frightful to listen to, augmented in intensity, as these seeming groans and mutterings are, by the presence of the sombre ruins around and the otherwise deathlike stillness that pervades the scene!

Upon the occasion of a storm outside the howls are increased, the commotion in the well is augmented, the muttering, and splashing, and struggling are ten-fold greater than in ordinary weather. Its moans at times are plaintive, as if they came from the voices of pleading captives below there. At other times fierce shrieks of anger and vengeance may be imagined to well up on the ear from those disturbed and fearful depths; but never, in all the ages that have passed since these terrible sounds began, can these mysterious phenomena have been otherwise than painful as well as terrific to the listener who hears them for the first time.

This place had been visited once, amid his wanderings, by Pietro Ilphonso, and it had fallen in the way of Una also in the course of her tours about the country; but Fineja too had frequently been to the old castle, and was acquainted with it well by common report, and he had often looked up at its ruins, outlined as they are in bold relief against the sky, and he knew where stood the well.

Without knowing positively whom she would meet there—though she suspected it might be Fineja, from certain hints in the disguised correspondence—Una at length made a private appointment with the writer to confer with him in person on a certain day, at this old castle, where it was agreed the boy should also be present, to see the charming lady who had called to greet him so many times at the priest’s dwelling in past years—an arrangement which greatly pleased young Carlos, who had very frequently inquired, since he had last seen her, what could have become of Donna Oona, as he called his fair visitor.

It was not an uncommon thing for the Donna Una to go forth, with or without attendants, in the neighbourhood, and nothing was thought about her absence at the old castle by her father or family. Early in the afternoon she drove over to the river, and slowly made her way through the windings that led up from the Ebro to the base or ruins of this castle.

Ordinarily a group or two of visitors might be seen there. On this occasion there were none, and Una was disappointed at not seeing even her expected correspondent, who had not yet arrived, as it proved.

She lingered among the ruins, and even ventured to the dreadful well-hole, which she remembered having seen on her first visit there, when she had overheard the garrulous guide who accompanied a party of French tourists thither explain the horrible details of the tradition of that miserable old lord of the castle “who married seven wives in less than as many years, one after another, every one of whom had mysteriously disappeared—no one ever suspected how till long after his own death, when it was firmly believed that they all had been thrown into this fearful depth, and had perished there!” As well they might if they had been thus disposed of, thought Una, turning aside to encounter the figure of a person who was a total stranger to her, but, she observed, he held an eight-year-old boy by the hand, whom she did know upon sight, and, instantly stooping, she embraced the lad, as she exclaimed:

“Dear Carlos! Where have you been so long?” But her endearments were instantly checked by the

other personage, who said, in a tone which she instantly thought she recognized, though she could not tell who the speaker was:

“Quiet, senora! Not too loud here! We may have listeners!”

But the heart of the mother was filled with joy at beholding her brave boy again alive, in robust health, active, handsomer than ever, and so like his splendid father, whom, spite of all his faults, she still loved, but could not acknowledge as her husband for her life!

The attendant of the boy answered all the lady’s many questions, and she passed into his hands a heavy purse of gold.

He had not come until late. The sun was already declining. She must return ere it became too dark to get down conveniently to the river’s side, she said, where her carriage stood, a family vehicle, in which she had ridden over from the village.

Her unknown companion had already proposed to wait upon her down the declivity, and had made another appointment with her, at this same spot, one month from that day and hour, when both the lady and the stranger were suddenly made aware of the presence of a third party near them, whom Una did not recognize until he spoke, but the attendant of the boy had evidently not forgotten him, although he little expected to encounter him there.

“How long has this been going on?” demanded the stranger, in a clear, stern voice. “Take care of the boy!” he said. “Quick, Una, hasten to your carriage. I will join you. Wait for me. This is Fineja, your mortal enemy!” he cried.

And, as the cowering knave turned to flee from the roused ire of that powerful intruder, one heavy hand of the stranger fell upon his shoulder, while the other grasped the rogue by the throat, and he forced his victim to the edge of the fearful well, near where he had been for ten minutes concealed, listening to the other’s story which he had poured into Una’s ears.

“Miserable villain and trickster!” yelled Pietro Ilphonso, for it was he, “take the reward of your treachery. You have triumphed for a time, but your sins and your moments are now numbered. Go!”

Before he could utter a cry for mercy, reprieve, or pity, the stalwart Pietro, in his madness and thirst for vengeance, seized the cowardly traitor and hurled him headlong into that frightful abyss, then hastened away from the spot with rapid strides in search of Una and the boy.

Down, down, down went the body of Fineja, and a thundering splash and crash and yell came up from below as he struck the deep water. Then, for an instant, was heard a shout, a struggle, a gurgling, a groan at the bottom of the well; then all was comparatively quiet. Fineja had disappeared.

Una hastened away with the boy down by the tangled path—and Pietro, after his savage and unregretted performance, hastened after the fleeing fugitives.

Young Carlos did not comprehend it all, but he was wondrously excited with this hurried manœuvre, and trod closely in the footsteps of the lady as she went on towards the valley below.

But the apparently doomed Fineja had simply taken by far the shortest and most expeditious route to the river, as he well knew.

It was not a pleasant way to be sure, and it was somewhat risky. But that frightful well-hole led in a direct line to the troubled bed of the torrent described, which for ages has rushed down from the mountains directly under the base of the old tower; and the unearthly noises and rumbling and splashing heard upon the floor of that great hall above its mouth are caused by the falling and heavy rush of the waters underneath the rocks just at that point, which flow away thence in a deep and rapid current, outward, down through the outer ravine alluded to, and into the Ebro.

In half a minute from the time that Fineja struck the deep water at the bottom of the threatening well he came out, far away below, to the surface of the rapidly flowing current, and rose—to air, and light, and life!

But, forced onward by the irresistible flow of waters, he passed swiftly down the stream, dodging with feet and hands the fallen tree-bolls and jutting rocks by the way, and quickly found himself little the worse for the terrific cold bath to which he had been subjected, thrust sharply out into the river, within a few rods only of the spot where stood the two spirited horses he and the boy had ridden to the castle.

He instantly struck out for the shore, and shortly landed—for he was an excellent swimmer—and, shaking the water from his dress and hair, unloosed the two horses from the trees where they had been secured; and soon heard the voice and steps of Una and the boy.

The moment they came near enough Fineja shouted lustily to the boy:

“Quick, Carlos! Hasten!”

As the youngster ran to his tutor’s side he asked: “What is it?”

“Quick!” replied the knave. “Mount, and away! Follow me. He’s after you!”

“Who?” cried the boy, bounding glibly into his saddle. “Who’s after me?”

“He whom I warned you of, boy! Come on!”

Striking his long Spanish spur into his own beast’s flank, he darted away down the low margin of the stream like the wind, with the boy flying after him upon the other horse.

A few steps below, at a narrow passage, he plunged his mettlesome animal into the river, with Carlos close behind; and, crossing the stream, clambered up the opposite bank, and dashed into the woods beyond.

The boy’s horse faltered in the water, and did not make good headway. But he got through and safely out, and tore along the opposite margin, for a moment or two, while Carlos stood up in his stirrups, and hallooed for his companion, whom he had temporarily lost sight of.

Pietro reached the base of the hill, beneath the shadow of the great old castle just in time to get a glimpse of Carlos, whom he knew, distinctly, from his dress and form—as the boy was tearing along down the opposite bank of the river. He saw no other figure—for his intended victim was out of view in the close woods. He groaned aloud—for he feared that Carlos had fled—afrighted.

He turned aside to notice a carriage just leaving the scene, upon the highway, a quarter of a mile beyond him—and headed towards the villa of Perillo.

He did not doubt that Una occupied that carriage, but he was too far away to hail or overtake it.

Una had come down with young Carlos, hastily, and saw a stranger at a distance induce the boy to leave her.

She then noticed that they both sprang upon their horses—and plunged into and across the river. She could not comprehend it; but night was coming on, and she turned homeward with a heavy heart.

Carlos quickly found the drenched and excited Fineja, and, together, the riders galloped away in the darkness!

(To be continued.)

THE lands of Ness Castle, belonging to Lord Salton, have been purchased by Mr. Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, for Sir John Ramsden, for 90,000*l*. Sir John Ramsden will now be one of the largest holders of property in the neighbourhood of Inverness.

CLOTHES FOR HER MAJESTY’S MINISTERS.—A curious and ancient custom was observed the other day, in the form of an annual distribution of “livery cloth” to the great officers of State by the Corporation. The cloths are selected by the “Livery Cloth Committee of Aldermen,” and are cut up into lengths of 44 yards each. They are then distributed by Mr. H. Hadland, the hall-keeper, to the gentlemen who are entitled to receive them—namely, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Lord Chancellor, the Chamberlain of the Royal Household, the Vice Chamberlain of the Household, the Lord Steward, the Controller, the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen’s Bench, the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls, the Recorder of London, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, and the Common Serjeant. In addition to these, the Town Clerk receives six yards of black cloth and six yards of green cloth, and the principal clerk in the Town Clerk’s office has four yards of black cloth and four yards of green cloth. It is estimated that this annual distribution of “livery cloth” involves an expenditure of about 240*l*.

LET YOUR CHILDREN HAVE PETS.—The young should be taught to regard animals with affectionate interest. All repugnance to animals of any kind should be struggled with, if it exists, and every effort should be made to prevent its being implanted, as a feeling calculated to occasion much evil. The benevolent truth should be impressed that animals, though endowed with inferior degrees of intelligence, and not stamped as we are with the broad mark of accountability, still possess a nature kindred in some important respects to our own, and have feelings to be wounded and irritated, and affections to be brightened and cultivated, like ourselves. The practice of kindness towards animals should go hand in hand with lessons. Children should be encouraged to keep pets, to tend them themselves, and endeavour to bring out all their best qualities. It should be our aim, while thus conveying a knowledge of the different tribes of the animal world, to show how, in their structure, generally so full of complicated wonders, and in their nice adaptation to the circumstances in which they are calculated to live, they, so far from being mean or low, are invested with one of the most majestic of commissions, that of proclaiming Almighty wisdom and goodness.



[THE NEW VICTIM.]

THE THREE PASSIONS.

BY THE

Author of "Sweet Eglantine," "Evander," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXV.

Make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse;
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose. *Macbeth.*

Mr. Grace had been so overcome with fear as to be unable to struggle with the danger into which she had fallen, it would only have been a natural result after what had passed; but she was made of sterner stuff, and her presence of mind was such that she was always cool, calm, and collected when in most need of all her faculties. Nevertheless, she simulated fear in order to excite the pity of the man in whose power she was.

"Are we alone here?" asked Chickton, relaxing a little his grasp upon her throat.

"I have no money about me," replied Grace, evading the question, and trying to induce him to believe that she took him for a robber; "but if you will accompany me into the house, I will give you what jewels and money I possess, and I declare that I will not call any one to help me."

Chickton smiled.

"Is it possible that you take me for a thief?" he said.

Grace was a consummate actress, and her attitude, which represented a complete stupor, together with her scared and frightened looks, seemed to say:

"What on earth are you here for if not to rob me? and why seize my throat and threaten me with a dagger?"

He interpreted the expression of her face and exclaimed:

"You are mistaken. I am not here to take anything from you, and I am not an assassin, yet I should not scruple to injure you severely, and perhaps kill you outright, if you cried out and made a disturbance calculated to bring people to your aid."

The expression of fear changed to one of profound astonishment, as if she could not believe the evidence of her senses, and that he was either trifling with her or she had misunderstood him.

"I am in this house alone with two servants," she said, "one of whom is an old woman, nearly blind and deaf; the other is a middle-aged man, and, as I have not much to expect from the help of these, you perceive that I am at your mercy."

The terrified accent in which she spoke, and the

conviction that she was entirely in his power, induced Chickton to feel ashamed of using violence to a woman, when, as it seemed at present, there was no absolute necessity for it.

Consequently he released his hold, and allowed her to breathe freely once more, though the blackened marks of his fingers on her delicate and sensitive skin would have been easily perceptible in the light.

"Are you serious in saying you do not know me and cannot guess why I am here?" he asked.

Grace remembered Chickton as a boy, and had had him pointed out to her one day when passing down Arundel Street, as he was standing at the entrance to Snarby's Hotel, and even if she had not been able to recognize him again by the faint light which prevailed her keen perception would have told her that no one but he would have taken the trouble to introduce himself into the old house at Sea View.

"Oh, yes, I think I do know you now," she replied.

"You came here last night, and I fired at you."

"Exactly; but you did not do me much harm. Luckily your bullet grazed my shoulder without inflicting any great injury. Knowing every inch of the old place by heart, I gained an entrance over a wall and let this rope down the rook"—he pointed to the cord as he spoke—"to facilitate my retreat if necessary, and I adopted the disguise of a sailor to prevent recognition. All this trouble I took to be able to have the honour of a private conversation with you."

"At all events, you have taken a very roundabout and singular way to gain an audience which you might have had for the mere asking, though I suppose I ought to thank you for the compliment you have paid me?" replied Grace, with a smile.

"Perhaps it would not have been so easy to get at you as you seem to imagine. If I wished to catch a bird on the nest, I should not come in broad daylight and make a noise, I should creep up in the darkness with all possible stealth and take it unawares."

"Your example may be very interesting, but I shall be glad if you will tell me who you are and what you want, as I find it cold out here, and I am not quite at my ease with you," answered Grace, with a gesture of impatience.

"My name is Chickton. I am an Indian merchant, and have not been long in London. I live at an hotel in Arundel Street, with a little girl I have adopted and an Indian who is my faithful servant. While I was out the other night some villains tried to steal my child," he said.

"Really, this is not in the least interesting to me. Am I to regard you as a madman to relate this to one who does not know you? I hope sincerely you

may prove a harmless lunatic," rejoined Grace, playing the part she had resolved upon.

"If you will listen until I have finished, you will understand me."

Grace shrugged her shoulders again as if she would say "I suppose I must humour him," and appeared unconcerned, though she was terribly anxious, and her heart was beating quickly.

"I have said my name is Chickton," continued he. "Ten years ago, when you were serving behind the counter in your mother's shop in Deal, I was a servant here."

"Were you in Mr. Solomon Tulse's employ? He was a relation of my husband."

"Yes. At that time I was the friend—the dear friend—of as fine a fellow as ever walked the deck of a ship."

Grace trembled. She knew what was coming now.

"Walter Tottenham and I—"

"Why do you repeat the name of a man I used to love and whose untimely loss I deplore?" interrupted she, while she pressed her hands to her bosom, and a sigh escaped her breast.

"Yes, you loved him as the wild beast loves its prey, as the boa-constrictor loves the harmless rabbit which runs about its case, or sits huddled with terror in a corner, while he watches it with a glittering eye and elongates his coils for their deadly work."

"Your knowledge of natural history is amusing, Mr. Chickton," said Grace, with some assurance. "Just now you delighted me with the example of the bird-catcher and the bird on the nest, and now your picture of the constrictor and the rabbit is really interesting. I fancy I can see it before my mind's eye. Poor rabbit! hateful snake!"

"If you had said 'Poor Walter!'" returned Chickton, gravely, "he would have been alive now; but that is foreign to what I am now talking about. Before his death Solomon Tulse employed me confidentially to undertake what I have ever considered a sacred mission. I was to go to India to find his son, to whom he intended to leave all his fortune. He was immensely rich, though no one knew it. He took me into his confidence when he had reason to believe that Tottenham was foully murdered, though I learnt afterwards he escaped from the first attempt and fell a victim to the second. I went to India to find this son, and—"

Grace interrupted him with a cold smile.

"I now see why you have come to me," she exclaimed, "and I perceive that you are perfectly sane. Pardon me for my injurious suspicions, and my uncourteous treatment. I was labouring under a mis-

apprehension. You wish to demand an explanation from me, and I am perfectly ready and willing to give you it."

"Really!" ejaculated Chickton, embarrassed in his turn by the unexpected aspect of affairs.

All this while he had held her by the arm, and, as if fearful of some stratagem on her part, he tightened his grasp a little.

"Oh," she said, sadly, "do not be afraid; I have no wish to escape you. I am only too happy to find a man who has known Tottenham, and to whom I can open my heart completely. When it's inmost recesses which you have formed will be removed, and you will have an estimate of my character very different from that which I can see you have formed."

These words completed Chickton's amazement, and if Grace had at that moment striven to escape it is more than probable she would have succeeded in doing so, as he would have been taken by surprise, and incapable of preventing her.

"Speak!" he cried; "let me hear what you have to say."

She drew the folds of a shawl which she wore more closely round her shoulders.

"Pardon me—I am cold," she said, adding, in the same sad tone which had first of all touched him, "now listen to me, Mr. Chickton."

The latter was anything but a simpleton, as we have seen, but it was not surprising that he was to some extent deceived by Grace, who was both beautiful and clever. At the same time he warned himself to be on his guard, mentally saying:

"Take care; she is acting a part, and wishes to delude you."

But, knowing this, he allowed himself to some extent to be deceived by her sad voice and melancholy attitude, which seemed to be aroused by the memory of a long-buried and wretched past.

"Ten years ago," continued Grace, "I was young, handsome, and ambitious. I might have been very happy had I not had an evil genius constantly by my side. You remember Dalton, the pilot; he is dead now, and I will not say much against him. As he lodged in our house we met frequently. He was a friend of Mr. Tulse—he knew Tottenham, and it was his belief that the young man was Solomon Tulse's son, and that he would inherit the vast wealth which he was satisfied the old man had hidden away somewhere. It was he who advised me to marry Tottenham for the sake of the money he would have at Tulse's death, and, though I did not love him, I agreed to the proposal."

Chickton made a gesture which seemed to say, "I know all this."

"Unhappily I had a lover," Grace resumed—"in fact I had two. These were Mr. Cecil Ives and Sir Harry Daubarn. For Mr. Ives I had always entertained a strong affection, but I did not know that they both cherished a mortal hatred to Tottenham."

"That is easily explained," said Chickton; "they were the only heirs-at-law, as they thought, to Mr. Tulse. Tottenham stood between them and not only their love but their property."

"Exactly. Tottenham had some papers confided to him by Mr. Tulse, and those he gave me. I was ignorant of their contents and their value until after his death, which took place in this way. Dalton and Tottenham went on the sea in a boat; they were run down by Sir Harry's steam-launch, and Daubarn struck Tottenham when he attempted to climb up the side of the steamer, wounding him so badly that he sank to rise no more. After that I married Mr. Ives."

"Shall I continue your story for you?" asked Chickton.

"If you are able."

"You soon discovered the value of the papers—if you did not already know it—which Tottenham had confided to you as a sacred trust. Your husband and yourself went up to London, and presented an order on the East India Company, which they refused to honour, telling you to wait ten years, as they had Mr. Tulse's orders to that effect, and that, if the son or his heir did not appear at the expiration of that time, they would then take your application into consideration, adding that two orders had been issued by Mr. Tulse, and that they must be presented together."

"Precisely."

"There was a reason for this. Mr. Tulse feared foul play towards Tottenham, and fancied his heirs would be deprived of their inheritance; he consequently sent me to the company's office to put obstacles in your way."

"Where is the other receipt, or order?" inquired Grace, with as little concern as possible.

"I have it here, in the breast pocket of my coat. Since the time when I found it in Calcutta I have never parted with it," answered Chickton.

Grace trembled slightly, but her face did not betray what was passing in her mind.

"Have you found the son?" she asked.

"No; I believe him to be dead. He was wrecked and must have perished on the coast of Africa, unless he has been seized and carried into captivity. He left a child, however, who, as the grandson of Solomon Tulse, is the actual owner of the property."

"Where is this grandson?"

"He is here," replied Chickton, coldly.

"Are you mad?" she demanded, half angrily.

"I repeat that the young man is in this house!" cried Chickton. "It is useless to try to disguise the fact from me. You have been acquainted with a young artist named Sydney, and you have made him love you. His love for an unworthy object has betrayed him, and he is now in your house. He was conveyed thither by a man in your pay, and you have him concealed on the premises. You know as well as I do that Sydney the artist is the son of Syed Shah Jehan, who was the son of Solomon Tulse."

"What ground have you for your assertions?" asked Grace, who was like one turned into stone.

"Oh, the mode in which I have discovered everything is truly miraculous. It is not necessary that you should know. All that concerns you is that I am thoroughly acquainted with all the facts, and I decidedly shall not leave this house, or allow you to go out of my sight, until Sydney is given up to me, and you abandon this wicked and insane pursuit of a fortune which does not and never can belong to you. If you do this without giving me any trouble I promise that the past shall be forgotten, and that no harm shall come to you, but, if the slightest injury happens to Sydney, I will show you no mercy, and hunt you down as I would a wild beast."

Grace stood before him irresolute.

She was in doubt how to proceed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

So spoke the Fiend, and with necessity,
That tyrant spoke, accused his devilish deeds.

It is necessary to explain how Chickton discovered Sydney's flight and his hiding-place, though, as yet, he did not know of the existence of the subterranean chamber.

Acting on Marvelle's advice, he allowed Amine to be again mesmerized on the morning following the attempt to abduct her. The villains were too frightened at the consequences likely to follow their nefarious conduct to make any fresh attempt, and, retiring from the scene, they abandoned the enterprise for the present, awaiting the return of Ellis from the country to give them further instructions, meanwhile holding at his disposal the papers they had stolen.

Amine, when under the influence of the subtle magnetic power which the mesmerist threw into her system, followed Sydney with her mind's eye.

She stated that he was at Sea View with Ellis, and that a lady was preparing to leave London to join him, and that he was in great danger.

This was enough for Chickton, who started by the first available train, arriving in time to make arrangements for an entry, which he effected with the results we have described.

After a moment's reflection Grace threw off the mask. Falling on one knee, she exclaimed, in a contrite voice, raising her hands with a supplicating gesture:

"You are too clever for me. Have pity upon me. I am only a poor, weak woman, and you are a strong man. I have been acting under the control of others. My husband and I have run through our fortune, which has been squandered by my extravagance. We are poor, and this fortune was so tempting."

"You must relinquish all hopes of it," said Chickton, sternly.

"I will—from this hour I swear never to think of it again. It is a wild, insane nightmare, a chimera, a will-o'-the-wisp which has been luring me on to my destruction, but I implore you to think that I am only weak, not guilty."

"I wish to think as well of you as I can, and if you lead me to Sydney—"

"At once—follow me. I will make all the amends and reparation which lie in my power. I will indeed," she answered as her hypocritical tears fell fast. "I have done all I could to keep you and this young man apart, but fate is too strong for me, and I yield. I own that I am defeated, and you are the conqueror."

"Lead the way," Chickton answered; "but if you attempt to deceive me, remember that I have a dagger which I shall not scruple to use in self-defence, and that I can bring you to justice for a conspiracy to defraud."

"I know that all farther resistance and subterfuge are useless. I tell you frankly that I have abandoned the chase," she replied, with a profound sigh.

They walked close together to the passage, she going first, and Chickton following at her heels, ready to treat her with the utmost rigour if the least occasion arose.

There was no one in the corridor, along which streamed a light coming from the candles which were burning in the sitting-room under the floor of which Sydney was in a sound sleep, owing to the powerful narcotic she had administered to him.

They entered the chamber together, and Chickton looked around him, seeing no one, and an expression of distrust mingled with disappointment crossed his features.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

At the same time he stood between her and the door, so as to shut off all escape.

"He is here, beneath our feet," she replied.

Chickton smiled.

"Are you joking?" he said. "Because, if you are, I warn you that I am not in the humour for such pleasantry." A shade of doubt chased away the smile, and he added, fiercely, as a terrible thought crossed his mind. "Is he dead? Have you buried him?"

"It is strange," she responded, "that you, who have lived at Sea View, should not have heard of a subterranean chamber."

"Where?"

"As I have told you, underneath the floor. Allow me to light a fresh candle, and I will initiate you into the mysteries of this place."

Chickton thought it odd that she should light another candle, as there were already two burning on the table, but he said nothing.

"Stand here and fear nothing," she said, holding the light in her hand and taking her place on the flooring over the secret room.

He did so, but not without an inward tremor.

"Dare to play me false, and—"

She interrupted him.

"Have I not told you that I am desirous of making amends? What have you to fear?" she said. "If I intended to precipitate you into an abyss, should not I fall with you?"

"That is true," he muttered.

At the same moment she touched the spring, and the floor began to descend in its usual fashion.

When the motion of the machinery ceased they stepped on one side, and the platform ascended, leaving them together in the prison.

Sydney still slept, and was perfectly unconscious of their presence.

"Do not be alarmed," said Grace; "he is only sleeping from the effects of a narcotic which I gave him a few hours ago. If you doubt my word place your hand upon his heart and you will find that it still beats."

Chickton did so; the pulsations were regular, and its action healthy.

"When will he be conscious?" he asked.

"About the middle of the day to-morrow, not before," she answered.

"I shall remain here until he does recover," exclaimed Chickton, with an air of determination. "I shall not suffer you to depart."

"Would you like to tie my hands?" asked Grace, with an affection of humility. "I am entirely in your power."

"That is unnecessary," he rejoined, bluntly.

"Will you allow me to go to sleep? I am tired, and any farther conversation likely to take place between us will be extremely uninteresting to me."

"You will do as you please respecting that," said Chickton.

Grace sat down on a chair, allowing her head to rest against the wall, closed her eyes, and pretended to sleep.

In reality her mind was much perturbed, but she rejoiced to think that the candle which she had lighted was one of those supplied by Mike Gradder, which were so cunningly prepared as to stupefy any one who breathed for any length of time the pernicious influences they threw off.

To bring one of these into the secret chamber and light it was a dangerous experiment, because she was exposed to its noxious fumes as well as he, and the somniferous emanations of the light would induce sleep in both of them.

Her only hope was that Ellis would presently seek her, and, not finding her in the house, institute a search which would result in her discovery where she was.

Everything depended upon the sagacity of this man. She was exposed to terrible anxiety and suspense, but, being, as we have had occasion to observe, a woman of admirable presence of mind, she did not lose her self-control, though she every moment felt herself growing more and more drowsy.

At all events by her daring act she would gain time, and that was everything.

It was her opinion that her influence over Sydney was so great that if he had then been sensible he would have repudiated Chickton, abandoned all hope of his fortune, unless she enjoyed it with him, and cast in his lot with hers whatever it might be.

The danger was that Chickton might by a terrible array of facts portray her in her real character and disgust the young man with her.

Would he not recoil from a woman who had been an accomplice in the murder of her first husband, who had plotted to gain property to which she had not a shadow of right, and who had for her own wicked ends represented herself as a single woman when she had for ten long years been the wife of another?

How could a young and honourable man possibly love any longer one who could be guilty of such baseness, such fraud, and such treachery?

With her eyes half closed she watched Chickton, who began to nod. His hand fell upon his breast, though he tried in vain to rally himself, and she just saw his eyes shut as she herself became unconscious. They both slept.

Her surmise as to what Ellis would do was not far wrong. He soon awoke from the uneasy slumbers into which he had fallen, and forthwith began to look for Grace.

His surprise at not finding her anywhere in the house was intense, and he sat down to think what could have become of her.

"It is my idea," he said to himself, "that she is in the cavern with the caged bird. Her manner seems to indicate that she is in love with him, and I must interfere if there is anything sentimental going on, and put a stop to it, once and for ever."

He waited, applying himself to the solace which a bottle of wine and a pipe afforded, for more than an hour. Then he kicked on the floor with his heel, but, receiving no response, began to fear that something was wrong, and he felt that he should not be satisfied until he had explored the secret chamber.

He knew the position of the knob in the wall, and, pressing it, let himself down. The atmosphere into which he descended was oppressive and almost stifling, and indeed it was so thick that he stood for some time on the platform to allow it to escape into the room above, as if through a ventilating shaft.

When he saw Grace unconscious on a chair, Sydney in the same state on a couch, and Chickton helpless on the floor, to which he had rolled, he thought some horrible tragedy had taken place.

Grace was in a state which would not permit her to afford any explanation whatever, and, as a first precautionary measure, he ascended with her body in his arms to the upper room, and, laying her on a sofa near an open window, left her to recover while he made a second descent.

"This is Mr. Chickton, the would-be friend and protector of Sydney," he muttered, in perplexity.

"How could he have come here? That is a mystery. One of Mike Gradder's candles, too. Ah, that explains it. Mrs. Ives has been surprised by Chickton; he has threatened her. See, here is a dagger on the floor. She has brought him here, lighted a candle, and trusted to circumstances and to me."

Satisfied with this mode of unravelling the enigma, he searched Chickton, examining every pocket, for the man had the instincts if not the practice of a thief. "There were no weapons about him, but he took a large pocket-book from the breast pocket of his coat, and with this and the candle which had done its work he again sought the outer air."

"Both in the cage. That is good," he said. "For the present there is no danger, and I must wait until Mrs. Ives comes to herself before I do anything more."

Using vinegar and the most powerful restoratives that he could obtain, he busied himself in recovering her, and was glad to find his efforts, aided by the fresh air, successful, for in half an hour Grace opened her eyes, sighed, and looked curiously around her.

The storm which had been threatening and hanging about for the last twenty-four hours now broke with fearful violence. A perfect whirlwind, which caught up leaves and small stones in its circling eddies, blew in through the open window, distending the curtains, and making the pictures on the walls swing backwards and forwards by the cords to which they were suspended; big drops of rain fell and splashed upon Grace's upturned face, aiding somewhat in her recovery.

Ellis handed her a glass of wine, and when she was well enough to speak inquired:

"What has happened?"

"I have escaped a great danger," she answered. "At one time I thought that nothing could save me. Our phantom was none other than Chickton. Would that my shot had killed him! He knew everything. His daughter is a somnambulist, and in a magnetic trance she can see strange things. I pretended to be penitent when I found myself in his power, and led him to the chamber where Sydney is, but I took with me one of the prepared candles, with which it is lucky we had supplied ourselves. My whole trust was in you, and by finding myself here I can guess

that you missed me and made a search, discovering me insensible below."

"Exactly," answered Ellis; "now what is to be done with them?"

"That is a subject for consideration. Chickton admitted to me that he had on his person the valuable order on the India Company which we want. He must be searched for that."

"I have it," said Ellis, producing the pocket-book which he had taken from Chickton.

"Give it me!" cried Grace, extending her hands, which trembled in a nerveless manner.

He complied with her wish, and, hastily ransacking the book, she brought to light a half-sheet of note-paper, stained with age.

"Shut the window, if you please. I am better now, and the wind will put the candles out, besides driving the rain all over me. What an awful night," she said.

A loud clap of thunder, which made the house shake as it broke over the roof, was heard at this moment, quickly following a peculiarly forked and vivid flash of lightning.

"It is indeed," answered Ellis, who shut the window and drew the curtains down.

"Look in my desk on that table; here is the key, Ellis," continued Grace. "You will find an envelope marked with a dagger—so? That is the order which Solomon Tulze gave Walter Tottenham, the one which cost him his life. I want to compare the two."

Ellis quickly did as she desired him.

The two orders were in the same handwriting and differed only in the date, that which had been sent to Calcutta being a little earlier.

The form, which was as follows, was identical.

"Pay to the bearer at sight all the money standing to my credit, after sale, at price current, of stock held by me, in shares of the Honourable East India Company. Signed, SOLOMON TULZE.

"Sea View."

The date of one was June the 18th, that of the other July 23rd.

A further search showed Grace that there was nothing of importance in the pocket-book beyond the valuable document she had extracted, and she handed it back to Ellis.

The two orders she placed in the envelope marked with a dagger, which she slipped into the bosom of her dress, confining it there with a pin.

"These precious bits of paper will not leave my possession until they are presented for payment at the office of the company," exclaimed Grace, who was now in high spirits. "Our enterprize progresses more favourably than I had ventured to hope."

"Then there is no obstacle in the way of our getting the money at last?" said Ellis, joyfully.

"None that I can see," rejoined Grace. "The ten years which have retarded our operations will be over in a day or two. The heir is in our power; equally so is his friend Chickton, who has all along been our determined enemy. We have the orders, and I do not see what there is to prevent us from at once taking the fortune into our own hands."

"When will the day arrive?"

Grace calculated for a moment.

"To-day is Tuesday—Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Friday is the day," she replied. "The ten years will have elapsed then, and, according to the regulation made by the secretary of the company himself, he must pay to any one who brings the two orders."

"I don't like doing anything on a Friday," said Ellis, shaking his head dubiously.

"Don't be a bird of ill omen, and frighten one with your old, wild, worn-out, superstitious fancies," cried Grace, angrily.

"Perhaps it is nonsense. I'm sorry I said it," he replied. "Never mind. Let us talk about the men below us. What is to be done with them?"

Grace was silent.

"Well?" he ejaculated.

"They must die, I suppose," she said, with a sigh of regret.

"There is no 'suppose' about it," exclaimed Ellis, coarsely. "Die they must and shall, if I had twenty necks to swing by, and risked them all in doing the deed. I'll run the chance of dying twenty deaths to take their lives. Do you suppose there is any safety for us while they breathe the same air we do?"

"Oblige me by not being so vehement," said Grace, with increasing rage. "Your remarks are sufficiently forcible to carry conviction with them without the loud sound of your voice, which is disagreeable to me. You seem to forget the difference between our positions."

"Nonsense," said Ellis, in reply, insolently. "There is no difference in the positions of two people who are bound to one another by the participation in a huge crime such as ours is. Besides, you are as

basely born as I. If I was a servant you were a shop-girl, though you are now the wife of a gentleman. There is perfect equality between us, and I am as much master here as you are mistress."

The hate which flashed from Grace's eyes should have warned Ellis that he had raised a demon in her breast which boded him no good.

But, flushed with wine and inflated with the anticipation of soon possessing a large sum of money which would make him independent of the world, he paid no heed to her looks.

"Dalton is dead," she muttered. "Sir Harry Darnbarn is a reclusive and a broken-hearted man, from whom there is nothing to fear. There remains but this one thorn in my side. Shall I suffer him to remain so? No, no, no! A thousand times emphatically no!"

"What is that you are saying?" asked Ellis, who saw her lips moving.

"Nothing of any importance, my friend," she answered, in a freezing tone, and with a deceitful, wicked smile which chilled him to the marrow of his bones. "I was only thinking how amiable you are and what a pleasant way you have of expressing yourself. That is all, except that I consider myself fortunate in having so able an accomplice in my guilt. You are invaluable, and if I ever make the acquaintance of any other candidate for the honours of Newgate when I have done with you I shall have the greatest pleasure in giving you the highest possible recommendation."

"We shall never part until death steps in to separate us. You don't shake me like me off so easily," answered Ellis.

"Oh, I don't know about that!" rejoined Grace, in a sarcastic voice, and toying unconcernedly with a piece of paper. "That is entirely a matter of opinion."

There was something in the inflection of her voice as well as the dangerous flashing of her eyes which alarmed Ellis, who hastened to make his peace.

"I did not mean anything," he said. "I—I—"

"Don't trouble yourself to apologize," interrupted Grace.

"Very well, I won't," he returned, savagely.

"Let us talk business again."

"As you like."

"I suppose I am to be the executioner in this case. Are you content to leave it to me?"

"No," rejoined Grace. "I will have no violence used. They are in the trap, there let them stay. If no air be admitted to the vault, they will be half dazed when they wake and incapable of action. They do not know the secret machinery by which the floor moves, and there is no help for them. Let them die of semi-suffocation and want of food."

"A few blows with a knife or a pistol bullet will be safer far. Dead men tell no tales, as I observed before," answered Ellis, doggedly.

"You have mistaken your vocation. You should have been a butcher," Grace said, in a tone of withering contempt.

"Is it worth while to leave anything to chance or not?" he demanded. "I should not have expected such weakness from you."

"I am not weak, as you will discover before long," she said, in a significant voice.

"What do you mean?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Nothing," she rejoined.

Ellis applied himself once more to the wine bottle, the contents of which began to take immediate effect upon him. He had not been sober, strictly speaking, all day.

There was a piano in the room, and Grace sat down at it, playing and singing in a voice which was particularly sweet.

The man, rude, ignorant, blunt as he was, was not insensible to its charms, and he drank and listened and listened and drank until he fell asleep.

Occasionally Grace turned round to observe him, and when she saw that he was unconscious she closed the musical instrument and glided snake-like towards him.

In a corner of the room was a coil of thin rope, which had been used to cord some box or other, and, possessing herself of this, she again approached her victim.

Slipping the cord round his wrists and his ankles, she bound him securely, so that his most powerful struggles would not avail to free him.

Then she proceeded to drag him by his feet along the room and into the passage leading to the platform.

The thunder-storm had passed away, but the heavy rain continued to descend pitilessly.

Disregarding the drizzling drops, she continued to drag Ellis on to the platform and towards the parapet, on which she rested his body in such a manner that the slightest push from her would precipitate him into the awful depths below.

"He must wake first," she muttered. "The agony

of the death he is going to die must be present to him, or my revenge for his insults will be incomplete. He made me suffer in my self-esteem by wounding my pride. Besides, he is no longer useful to me. He has done his work, and helped me to reach the goal. I must reap the reward alone."

The rain descending on his face soon recalled him to himself.

"Where am I?" he gasped, in a faint voice.

Grace knelt down by his side, and put her mouth close to his face, so that he might not lose one word she said, the wind being high enough to carry the sound of her voice away.

"You are bound hand and foot. You are lying on the parapet of the platform above the rocks on which you are presently to fall," she said, solemnly, "and nothing but a miracle from Heaven can save you. Unhappily for you, Heaven does not work miracles for the children of men now-a-days, and you must perish."

Slowly the man began to comprehend his terrible position, and he became a prey to abject terror.

The determined energy of the woman in whose power he was made her resemble a relentless fiend.

"Mercy, mercy!" he cried. "Pardon me as you hope to be forgiven yourself. I had been drinking and I didn't know what I said."

The poor victim's voice rose to a shriek.

"Women like me who dare great deeds," she exclaimed, "have no creed, and care for nothing but self. It is useless to appeal to me."

"I have served you well," he continued, in a whining voice, his previous passionate effort having exhausted him.

"For your own ends, not mine. You expected to profit by your obedience to my orders," she answered, coldly.

"Spare my life and I will forget that I ever saw you," he went on. "I will not ask you for a shilling of the money we have plotted to gain. Life is of more value than money. Give me my life, my life, my life!"

"No, you must die. If I had not wished to enjoy my revenge you would have been hurled into eternity insensible as you were, but that would have been no punishment to you."

In those few minutes Ellis lived an age.

The fear of death fell upon him, and he could plead no more. He sobbed like a child, and big tears rolled down his cheeks.

Grace stood by and gazed over his misery.

At length she tired of the scene, and, giving his helpless body a push with her jewelled hand, he fell over the parapet.

An awful shriek rang through the stillness of the night. Then all was still.

In spite of her self-possession Grace turned away with a shudder.

She sought the house and threw herself on the sofa in the sitting-room, where the candles were still burning. She had not the courage to go to her bedroom in the awful solitude of that old house.

Her vivid imagination would have peopled the mansion with ghosts. As it was she tried in vain to sleep, and longed ardently for morning.

It being summer, day broke early, and she rose hot and feverish from the couch on which she had spent the night. Such another one she hoped never to pass during the remainder of her existence.

Consulting a time table, she found that the first train left Deal at half-past seven in the morning.

She had no fear that Chickton or Sydney would be able to emerge from the secret chamber. They did not know where to look for the spring by means of which the flooring could be compelled to descend, and even if they did they would awake from their enforced sleep in such a confused and exhausted condition as to be scarcely able to move.

Perhaps they would never wholly regain consciousness before death put an end to their imprisonment.

She told the old woman that Ellis had gone on to London and that she was about to return, gave her a few shillings, and left her in her usual state of semi-idiotcy, arising from naturally defective mental power, old age, and its concomitant infirmities.

The train took her to London after a weary journey of more than three hours, and she went in a cab to her house.

Cecil Ives had just come down to breakfast, habited in a loose dressing-gown.

"Well?" he ejaculated, coldly, without exhibiting any tender emotion at seeing his wife after her absence.

"All goes well. Our enemies are harmless, and I have the two orders on the India Company," she answered.

"Then we shall get the money?"

"Nothing can prevent it," she said, confidently.

"Thank goodness all this plotting is over at last," he exclaimed, with a sigh of relief. "I should have

made a bad conspirator, for I cannot bear anxiety and suspense. Now we can enjoy life, and the object of your ambition will be realized."

"Little thanks to you," said Grace, adding, "I will tell you the details of my adventures after dinner. Now I am going to bed, for I had no rest last night and little the one before."

"You are sure that everything is safe?" he queried once more.

"I am positive. Do you want to see the orders, or will you take my word for it?" she rejoined, petulantly.

"If you say so, my dear, I am perfectly satisfied," he hastened to say. "I merely asked because I thought I would go and look at a new drag, and choose some horses, and select some diamonds for you."

"Never mind now; look after your own wants—I can take care of myself!" she exclaimed, and, without another word, left the room.

"So!" muttered Cecil Ives, "my wife has triumphed, and I am a millionaire. But the means!—who cares about the means, so long as the end is attained?"

But was the end attained, as they supposed? That remained to be seen.

(To be continued.)

THE KING OF THE TRAPPERS.

CHAPTER XV.

THE morning sun, as it streamed down upon the encampment of the Indians, revealed the two wretched prisoners, bound, back to back, to a post that had been placed in the centre of the wigwams.

It was a mighty sin, in Horse Shoe's eyes, that any one should dare to fancy the one he had chosen for a wife, and the punishment he would inflict would be in proportion to the offence.

This Philip Lee knew, and, had it not been for the presence of the girl, he would calmly have awaited his certain fate. Now his mental sufferings were terrible.

He could not see her face, but knew she was in great pain of body as well as mind, for the deerskin thongs with which they had been bound had been strained to the utmost limit, and were cutting into his own hard flesh. What then must be the situation of the soft limbs of the girl, and what could he say of consolation?

Yet they did converse—told each other again and again of their love, and that it would outlast even death.

Perhaps it would have caused a thrill of pleasure to mingle with their pain could they but have known that they were to die together.

But such was not to be the case.

A far more bitter and inhuman torture than any they dreamed of was to be theirs—one worse than knife, tomahawk, or arrow, or simple flame—the most fiendish that could be conceived of—for it had been decreed that the girl should take the life of him she loved—should stain her hands in his blood!

Almost with the sun the fiends of the forest and prairie began to gather around.

In their thirst for blood the mangled remains of their fellows had been hurriedly buried, and, save the ashes upon their heads, and the blackened faces, there was nothing to tell of mourning.

It might be that sorrow still lingered in some of their hearts, but their faces revealed nothing but the most diabolical vengeance.

Had the young trapper a hundred lives they would not have been sufficient to satisfy them. Nothing could have done so but the utter destruction of the entire race of the pale-faces.

At a sign from the chief the bonds of the girl were loosened, and she was motioned away. But, if her life had depended upon it, she could not have stirred.

The long-restricted circulation of the blood had left her limbs numb and useless, and, at the first step, she fell to the ground.

But soon the life-current ran free again, and, half rising, she grasped the garments of the trapper, climbed upwards, twined her arms around his neck, and their lips met, but brutal hands immediately tore her away, and, carrying her to a little distance, forced her to become a spectator of her lover's sufferings.

"Let the prisoner be prepared for torture!" thundered the chief, taking his place beside the girl, and compelling her to submit to caresses from which she shrank as from corruption.

"Coward!" hissed the trapper, "coward! to insult a woman! I wish the lightning would strike you dead!"

"Silence, pale-faced dog!—silence!—or I'll have your tongue torn out by the roots and roasted before your very eyes."

"Coward!" still vociferated Lee. "Oh, Heaven!

how I wish my hands were only at liberty. But you dare not do what you say."

It was a bold and foolish challenge, and Horse Shoe would have instantly carried out his threat had not the other chiefs interposed. Such a thing must not be, else the cries of the prisoner for mercy would not make music for their ears.

Suddenly the chief repeated his orders for the preparations for torture; and the young trapper was stripped to the waist, and showed a form that was the envy of all.

His hands were released, so that he could move his arms from the elbows, and his head was left free. This was the very subtlety of cruelty and the greatest test of nerves, for very few men could resist the impulse to move when they saw knife or hatchet coming directly towards the brain—few who would not raise their hands to protect their hearts. This the crafty Indians knew, and were ready to shout taunts at the first exhibition of cowardice. But the prisoner stood firm as iron. Not a muscle of his face moved.

The usual routine of boys with headless arrows and the younger braves with dulled knives was gone through with, and though the trapper did not escape without wounds, they were slight ones. Those who had won a name upon the war-path displayed their skill. Their weapons were indeed deadly ones; every knife and hatchet was sharpened to the utmost, and a fair blow from either would result in instant death. But such was not their purpose, as Philip Lee well knew. It was simply a trial of skill upon their part and fortitude upon his—to see how near they could hurl their weapons without inflicting a wound, and how well he could stand the test.

This over, at a signal from the chief, a bundle of sharpened pine splinters were brought, and Horse Shoe stepped forward and drove one into the flesh—would have driven it into the eye had he not desired that the trapper should see as well as feel the end of his malignant vengeance. In this he was followed by every warrior, though care was taken that the points should simply pierce and hang from the skin. It was torture, not death, they were inflicting; and though the prisoner—all but his face—looked like a human porcupine, yet there was nothing dangerous in his situation.

"Now," said the chief, "let the pale dog howl out his death-song."

A shout of defiance was the answer. There was no notice taken of this, farther than to hasten the final preparations. Dry and resinous wood was brought and piled around him, but at such a distance as to slowly roast him to death. It was true, the splinters would take fire and burn, but they would only blister, and there was little probability of the smoke producing strangulation.

The prisoner was fully prepared to meet his doom like a man, but instantly after he saw and heard that which caused him to shiver like a leaf in the autumn wind—to almost make a coward of him.

"The pale squaw will light the pile," said Horse Shoe, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the girl. "When she has burned up her pale dog of a lover she will become the wife of the red warrior."

"Never! Oh, Heaven have mercy," she screamed, struggling to get free.

But she might as well have endeavoured to get away from the hand of fate as the iron grasp of the chief. He swung her to her feet as easily as if she had been a child, and dragged her forward. And never did woman battle more fiercely, though without avail.

More dead than alive, she was forced to the pile of wood—the funeral fire from whose flames and smoke her lover's soul would be burnt from its covering of flesh.

A torch was put into her hands, and she was bidden to use it. What she would not do of her own volition she was made to do by force.

With one arm around her, Horse Shoe held her hands with the other, moved forward the fatal torch, and in an instant the dry wood began to blaze.

"Farewell, Maggie. Heaven save you and pity me," she heard issuing from the midst of the rapidly increasing flames and smoke.

"Oh, Heaven!" was her answer.

"Now the pale squaw will become the wife of the red-man," whispered Horse Shoe in triumph, and stooped down to pollute her pure lips with his kisses.

That was too much. Had he waited but one instant longer she would have fallen into his arms insensible.

Now all of the tigress in her nature was instantly aroused. The torch still remained in her hand—she swung it full into the face of Horse Shoe, and with a shout of mad joy sprang over the wood and clung—amid the flame and smoke—with her arms around the neck of her lover.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD Moscow sat alone in the darkness by the side of a little stream, bathing a terrible wound in

his head. He was pale, weak, and faint. The blow had been a heavy one, and the loss of blood great.

"This comes of trying to play squaw, and it almost serves me right for degrading myself so much. But there wasn't any other way that I could see to get to talk with the boy and girl, and if I had been a minute sooner that confounded Horse Shoe would have laughed on the other side of his mouth. But he is no child with a tomahawk. I never had a worse blow in all my life, and if the weapon hadn't turned slanting there would have been an end of Old Moscow, for certain. Ugh! how it does bleed and hurt!"

He paused to gather something to check the flow of blood and do up his wounds, so that his eyes would remain free from the constant dripping, then resumed, though often forced to stop and grind his teeth from pain:

"If I was only as good as I was a few hours ago the boy shouldn't be killed, or the girl married to a red-skin without a fight. But I don't see as I can help them now. The medicine and squaw games are played out; it wouldn't do to try such a thing again. Yet I can't make up my mind to let them go without a struggle, and I wish I could think of something. Yes, I'll go back," he muttered, louder than was common, for his feelings had for the time got the better of his caution, and his voice could have been heard for some distance. "Yes, I'll go back. It shall never be said that Old Moscow knew what fear was. It'll be torture of the worst kind, but that doesn't matter."

Here he began walking slowly in the direction of the wigwams. He had no settled purpose as to what he would do when he came to the Indian village, yet there was a vague idea that he would somehow possess himself of weapons—would rush in and die fighting for those he loved.

But suddenly he paused, stood as rigid as the trees around him for an instant, then laid down with his ear to the ground. Long he remained there, but at length, apparently satisfied as to the nature of the strange sounds he had heard, he sprang lightly to his feet, with every appearance of age and pain vanishing, drew his belt more tightly around him, took long, deep breaths as one about to run a race, and darted away with all his power.

He did not go in the direction he had before been travelling, but from the wigwams of the red-men, and any one who had seen him would have said that Old Moscow, the King of the Trappers, had heard something that had turned him into a coward!

The flames darted with tremendous force and fury around the devoted lovers, and they would very soon have been consumed had not the Indians interfered, and, kicking aside the blazing faggots, tore the girl away, who was instantly seized by Horse Shoe and dragged towards his wigwam upon the opposite side of the village.

Then the still-smoking wood was piled around the trapper again and fresh fuel added, but before a single one of his manly limbs were severely scorched or a curl upon his head injured, a volley of bullets was poured from the woods and a band of hardy trappers, headed by Old Moscow, appeared upon the scene.

The Indians fled in all directions.

But the brave old trapper gave no heed to the fugitives. As he had been the first to rush from cover, so he was the first to reach the blazing pile, and, regardless of all personal danger, he cut the prisoner loose, flung him upon his shoulder, and carried him to a place of safety.

"Are you much hurt, poor boy?" he asked, wiping the scorched and blackened face tenderly, and with tears in his own eyes. "Are you much hurt?"

"No—no; but save Maggie," was the faint reply. "Where is she?"

"The chief carried her away just before you came and—may kill her. Oh, Heaven, if he should!"

"It is very likely," replied Old Moscow, coolly, though the working of his face showed intense feeling. "It is very likely before he would let her get away. Boys," he thundered to the band that had come with him, "the girl that I told you about has been carried off by Horse Shoe. Run for your lives and find her. Some of you come here and take care of the boy, for I must go too. It wouldn't do for the chief to be killed without I struck the blow. My conscience would never be easy."

Like searching hounds the trappers disappeared in every direction, save those who remained with Lee and endeavored to keep him quiet.

Every nook and corner was explored, but nothing could be found. The chief appeared to have spirited both himself and the girl away without leaving a trace.

Old Moscow fretted and fumed and growled accordingly, and it was not until a little boy gave the information that he had seen the chief riding away with the girl that he acted at all reasonably.

"He did not kill her," he muttered; "that's some consolation. He will strike for the branch of his tribe that lives at Spirit Lake."

His keen and experienced eye ran over the horses that were tied near, and, flinging himself upon the back of one that promised the most speed, he dashed madly away, with his blood up and feeling every inch a man, for he was not only well mounted but armed.

At the first some of his companions had kept within sight. But one after another they had dropped out of the race, or turned aside to find some other trail, and he was entirely alone in a prairie of considerable extent that was broken by a small grove at but a little distance ahead, and nearly in the centre of the treeless plain.

That such a point of observation should escape the eye of one like Old Moscow was impossible. Could he have arranged matters to his own satisfaction he could scarcely have been better pleased. Once there both himself and horse would be securely hidden. He would most likely find water as well as feed, and he could see for miles around.

Without the slightest idea of danger he pressed forward until within a short distance, then was recalled to a sense of his situation by the whizzing of an arrow past his ear, and, instantly turning his horse, he rode to a safer distance, and prepared his rifle for service.

"I might have known," he growled, with a sense of shame stealing over him. "If I had been half as keen as I thought I was I could have found and followed their trail, and told where the reptile was."

Then he raised his voice to its greatest power, and continued:

"Come out and fight like a man, if you dare, and not be hiding like a cowardly wolf."

The only reply was another arrow that struck but did not pierce the flesh of the horse, and, as it dropped harmless to the ground, the trapper resumed, with a smile:

"If you ain't got any better weapons than that bow, I am not in any danger. But if you'd only show your ugly body ever so little I'd soon teach you what kind of a one I had, and how well I could use it."

For a long time the battle continued a distant one—the Indian shooting his barbed arrows, and the white man not daring to return the fire for fear of injuring the girl. But it could not last. There never was a quiver that would not give out, be it filled ever so full, and when Old Moscow had determined that such was the case he was about to dismount and creep near, using the horse as a shield. Then the Indian spoke for the first time, challenging him to a fair fight.

"Let the pale-face lay aside his fire weapon," he said, "and To-ho-pe-ka will meet him on horseback, armed only with knife and tomahawk."

"Yes, after you've tried to take my life a dozen times with your bow and arrows. If you hadn't been a coward you'd have done it in the first place when I wanted you to. But even if I should agree to it now how can I know that you will keep your word?"

The Indian threw his still-strained bow out on the prairie, and, in doing so, exposed himself sufficiently for a fair mark, and the rifle of the trapper was instantly at his shoulder, his keen eye glancing along the barrel and his finger upon the trigger.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

NEEDLES.—There is a needle factory in New Haven where the whole process is done by a single machine, without the manual labour of any person. A coil of steel wire is put in. The machine cuts it off at the required lengths. It cuts the steel pieces consecutively, punches the eye holes, countersinks the eyes, and grinds the points, and, in fact, does everything until the needles drop out completely formed. Another machine picks them up and arranges them heads and points together, and a third piece of mechanism puts them into paper. One of these machines occupies no more space than an ordinary table; each of them turns out from 30,000 to 40,000 per day.

BREAD FROM CRUSHED WHEAT.—A new process of breadmaking has been practically carried out in France. It appears that the wheat is first deprived of its husk by means of properly constructed machinery; the grain is then washed in tepid water about 170 deg. Fahr. for the first bath, and 114 deg. for the others; whereby the gummy covering of the grain is dissolved and removed. This removal is necessary because this substance becomes very dark-coloured by fermentation. The wheat absorbs from 65 to 70 per cent. of water, and is then reduced to a paste by means of machinery similar to a chocolate mill. This perfectly white paste is leavened, and after fermentation is ready for baking. By this process, from a quantity of grain which by the usual process yields a little more than 2 cwt. of bread, the yield is increased to about 2½ cwt. of superior quality

and far greater nutritive power; and a very considerable saving of labour and expenses connected therewith is effected by the application of this new process, which, it is said, has been thoroughly tested by competent and independent scientific as well as practical men.

THE SMALLEST ENGINE IN THE WORLD.—Mr. D. A. A. Buck, jeweller, of Worcester, has built the smallest engine in the world. It is made of gold and silver, and fastened together with screws, the largest of which is one-eighth of an inch in size. The engine, boiler, governor, and pumps stand in a space seven-sixteenths of an inch square, and are five-eighths of an inch high. Perhaps a better idea of its smallness will be conveyed by saying that the whole affair may be completely covered with a common tailor's thimble. The engine alone weighs but fifteen grains, yet every part is complete, as may be seen by a microscopic examination; and it may be set in motion by filling the boiler with water and applying heat, being supplied with all valves, etc., to be found upon an ordinary upright engine.

HOW TO TEST PURE GLYCERINE.—Thomas Koller gives, in a German journal, the methods for detecting the impurities of glycerine. Pure glycerine is neutral, and leaves only a slight residue when evaporated in a porcelain capsule. The adulterated article may leave considerable black residue, and react acid. Pure glycerine, when cautiously mixed with an equal volume of oil of vitriol, is not browned even after the lapse of several hours; the impure often browns immediately. A solution of oxalate of ammonia does not even produce a cloudiness when mixed with pure glycerine, but may give a precipitate with the impure. Pure glycerine, treated with nitric acid and nitrate of silver, yields no precipitate; sulphide of ammonia sometimes gives a black colour in adulterated glycerine. Pure glycerine, in large and small quantity, is as clear as water; impure often shows different shades of colour, according to the extent of its contamination. Pure glycerine rubbed between the fingers gives no greasy feeling, while the impure resembles fat. The freezing-point of pure glycerine is near zero, while the impure may become solid at the same temperature as water. For the purification of glycerine, add ten pounds of iron filings to every 100 pounds of the impure liquid, and occasionally shake. In a few weeks, a black gelatinous sediment will settle and the supernatant liquid will be perfectly clear, and can be condensed by evaporation.

SAVING LIFE FROM SHIPWRECK.—A new invention has been patented by Mr. Rogers of the nature of a projectile to be fired from shipboard, consisting of a sort of anchor, with three expanding flukes, carrying a whip-line running over a pulley, and a projectile to be fired from shore in the form of a cone, similarly fitted. Each is furnished with a grooved base, which fits into the muzzle of a small mortar, the cord lying in the grooves, and being further protected from the explosion of the powder by a wooden sabot or wad. The inventor not only claims for his projectile a greater range than that of the rocket commonly employed, but also far greater accuracy, and a certain and firm hold wherever it may fall. Moreover, it carries a double line running through a pulley, so that as soon as the projectile is fixed, either on the ground or on board a disabled vessel, those who have fired it may at once haul out a rope sufficiently stout to make a secure communication with the shore. The projectile itself pursues a perfectly steady flight, so that its double line is not liable to be twisted or entangled; and there is an ingenious mechanism by which the pulley would clear itself from seaweed or other foreign matter by which it might be choked. In order to work effectively, however, the projectile must be of sufficient size, must be fired from an appropriate gun, must be furnished with two boxes of coiled whip-line, and there must be at hand a windlass for hauling in, and an adequate supply of rope of sufficient strength. For land service a cart is necessary for the conveyance of all these things; and it is to furnish such an outfit, to place it at a dangerous part of the coast, and to provide for its being worked in time of need, that further contributions are now solicited from the public.

REMOVING TREES FROM HYDE PARK.—A number of woodmen, gardeners, and labourers, under the direction of surveyors belonging to the Government department of the Woods and Forests, have for several weeks past been employed in removing large timbered trees from the space occupied by the first Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, from Albert Gate up to Knightsbridge Barracks, diverting the roads, making new ones, and laying out the large space of ground for landscape gardens. The large trees are removed by mechanical means, and attract a large concourse of people. The old trees, familiarly known during the Great Exhibition as Colonel Sibthorp's

trees, from the debates in the House of Commons, are, it is stated, to be removed for landscape purposes. The giant elm-tree that stood under Sir Joseph Paxton's palace of crystal exhibits signs of breaking up, and should an attempt be made to transplant this ancient tree it will be attended with great danger. The whole of the work will be most expensive.

THE IMAGE IN THE HEART.

A Christmas Story.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Dangerous Ground," "Heart's Content," "Sweet Eglantine," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ber. : Come, be a man.

Job : I can't, John, I can't.

Ber. : Nay, consider. Pluck up a courage, do, now.

Job : Well, I'll try.

BY moving his hands in a contrary direction to that employed at first Count Boso released Adele from her magnetic trance.

The girl looked wildly around her, and was perfectly unconscious of what had been going on. She appeared to be much exhausted.

Looking pityously at the count, she said, with an air of great respect :

"Do you want me any longer? Oh, let me be at peace! You have made me suffer so."

"Sleep," he answered. "I have no farther occasion for you now."

She closed her eyes, a smile of satisfaction and content stole over her features, and she fell into a calm, peaceful slumber.

"When she wakes, which will be in about two hours, you will find that she has recovered. The strain upon her system has been great, but no ill effects will follow; of that rest assured," continued the count.

The gentlemen thanked him warmly, and the count entered into a conversation with Mrs. Gainford respecting the marvellous faculty he possessed.

The lawyer and Mr. Edleston sat apart, talking earnestly.

"That you are my friend, Gainford, I have no reason to doubt," exclaimed Mr. Edleston, "and I feel that I can talk unreservedly to you. I have told you all. You knew my late brother-in-law, and you are aware how long and anxiously I waited for his property. To be deprived of it now would be very galling. I would much rather not have had it at all."

"There seems a great probability of an attempt being made to deprive you of it," answered the lawyer, gravely. "I have known Jaggars for many years; and he was always an astute, determined fellow, full of dogged perseverance."

"What am I to do? I do not feel disposed to tamely surrender what I have. I told Jaggars to do his worst, and he will do so, depend upon that. After all, what can he do?"

"The case is so simple," answered Mr. Gainford. "If, as we imagine, the child that was lost has grown up into Basil, the gipsy, and Jaggars can obtain documentary and other proofs of his parentage, you must vacate the Priory. The terms of the will are so plain."

"It seems likely that the requisite proofs are in this mysterious box," mused Mr. Edleston.

"It is more than probable."

"If it were in our hands, the ground would be cut from their feet."

"Decidedly," rejoined the lawyer.

"Very well. If what we have heard from your daughter Adele's lips during the magnetic trance is reliable, what is to prevent us from stealing a march upon them?"

"Don't say 'us'!" exclaimed Mr. Gainford.

"Why not? Are you not with me?" asked the M.P., looking up at him with astonishment.

"Yes, certainly, as far as I may legitimately go, but no farther. I will assist you by my advice, and give you moral support, but I cannot mix myself up in any open act to defeat the claims of this young man. Consider, my dear sir, my professional character. It would be at stake, and the work of years might be undone in one unlucky day."

"Very true. Perhaps you are right. I must go to work single-handed, and this very night, too. Do you know this forest of Ellesmere?"

"Indifferently well."

"I am totally unacquainted with it," continued Mr. Edleston. "Being a new man in the county, I have not even been out shooting in it. Can you recommend me a guide?"

The lawyer reflected a moment, then said :

"There is a fellow who was a client of mine at the last sessions. He was indicted for poaching in

Ellesmere; but he had some money, and I engaged a clever counsel, who got him off on a technical ground. Jacob Smart the man's name is, and they say he has done more night poaching, and day too for the matter of that, in the forest than any man breathing in Elvetonham. He would be just the fellow for you."

"Send for him, if you please."

"Not here. Let him meet you at the 'Magendie Arms'; excuse me for being particular," said the lawyer, who was a cautious man, never putting out his hand farther than he could draw it back again. "I wish you every success."

Mr. Edleston asked for the address of Jacob Smart, and, having obtained it, thanked the lawyer somewhat coldly, saying :

"I shall know who are my friends in future."

Bidding the company good evening, he went to the "Magendie Arms," where he was well known, as his committee had sat there daily during the election, and, ordering a private room and a bottle of wine, despatched a messenger to Abbey Street, telling him to bring Smart with him.

"Don't let the fellow be afraid," he added; "say I have a job in hand for him, and will pay him well."

When he was alone he sat down and appeared much dejected, something like Richard III., as Shakespeare has pictured him, before the battle of Bosworth Field.

"Gainford will not help me practically," he muttered. "He sees what is coming. They say rats desert a sinking ship, and this cautious, calculating lawyer knows there is something in the wind; but I'll not give up tamely—no, not I. Besides, if it should be the box which the nurse buried, and if she put her confession in it, I have a reason for possessing myself of it that Gainford does not dream of."

A peculiar smile lighted up his face, and his gray eyes twinkled with a cunning that had served him at a pinch before. Repeated draughts of wine raised his spirits, and when the poacher was announced his passing fit of depression had vanished, and he was a different man.

Jacob Smart was a tall, thin, ill-looking man, strong, but naturally a coward, which disposition his frequent incarcerations in the county jail had not tended to diminish, for there is nothing that makes a man so shy, awkward, and what we call hang-dog, as being shut up in prison.

"Sarvant, sir," he said, standing near the door, cap in hand.

"They say you know the Forest of Ellesmere?" said Mr. Edleston.

"Every inch of it, sir. I was born close by. My father was a keeper."

"As you seem fond of shooting, that is what you ought to be."

"They won't employ me, sir. Every country gentleman's got his mark against me. I'm Smart the poacher, that's what I am, and when they give me three months they little think that the reason why I've snared a rabbit or a hare is to keep my wife and family from starving."

"Well, it's a hard case," answered Mr. Edleston, "and when a man gets a bad name it's difficult to get rid of it. 'Give a dog'—you know the saying. But if you serve me well this evening I'll put you on my estate as under-keeper, and make you a present of twenty pounds."

The poacher's eyes sparkled.

"What am I to do, sir? I'm ready," he exclaimed, and at that moment he looked as if he would not have objected to take a man's life, if by so doing he could have gained Mr. Edleston's favour.

"Do you know an open glade in the heart of the forest, where four oak-trees grow, surrounding a fifth which is in the middle?"

"Yes, sir. Dead Man's Clump we call it, because a pedlar was found murdered there."

"I want you to conduct me there."

"When?"

"To-night. You had best provide yourself with a lantern and a spade, and a heavy bludgeon in case we meet any desperate characters."

"A spade!" repeated the man, curiously.

He thought, after all, there was some black work in hand, as the mention of a spade was so suggestive of digging a grave.

"The fact is I want you to dig under one of the trees for me. You will know why when we get there," continued the M.P.

"I'm your man, sir. It won't do for poor folks like me to be particular. I'll take a lantern, though there'll be a moon to-night, she rises about half-past ten. I looked into the almanack to make certain, as I meant to do a bit of work down your way to-night among the pheasants in the Priory woods, sir."

"You're a cool sort of scoundrel," observed Mr. Edleston. "But no matter; all the better for my purpose. How long will it take us to reach Dead Man's Clump from here?"

"A good hour and a half."

"It's now nine. Make haste. I will start as soon as you are ready."

"It won't take me ten minutes, sir," replied Smart, "to get what I want together. Where shall I meet you? If won't look well for me to call here again for you."

"Right. It will not. Meet me on the other side of the railway crossing, just below the station, and—here, drink this tumbler of wine, it will warm you."

Mr. Edleston handed him some wine, which the man drank, then, wiping his lips with his sleeve, he made a clumsy bow and backed out of the room.

"So far so good," said Mr. Edleston, lighting a cigar. "If fortune only favour me this once, and I can find the box, I think I can laugh at Jaggars and the gipsy heir."

Allowing Smart sufficient time to make his preparations, he paid his bill at the hotel, and, pulling up his coat collar and drawing the brim of his hat over his eyes, went to the place appointed.

The poacher was there, and the two started side by side for the forest.

It was a sharp autumn night, and the twinkling stars in the clear sky gave promise of a frost before morning.

They had not completed more than half their journey before the moon rose, casting her silvery beams on meadow lands and fallow, rendering their path easier.

Smart did not presume upon the acquaintanceship which had so strangely begun between him and the rich man by his side. He spoke respectfully when spoken to, and showed that he recognised the difference there was in their relative positions.

Mr. Edleston was far too much absorbed in his own thoughts to be inclined for conversation, and when the forest was reached he was delighted to think they had achieved so much of their journey.

They struck into its dense shadows, Smart being the leader, and the giant trees, with their limbs nearly denuded of leaves, seemed to wave shadowy arms and warn away the intruders upon their primal privacy.

"Follow me, sir," said Smart, "but not too close, or a twig might catch you a smartish cut in the face as I bend back the boughs to make my way. You'll see the lantern; and, if you should miss me, you'd best give a sort of Hullo, unless you can do the thieves' whistle, as they call it, which is the signal between me and my mates."

Mr. Edleston admitted that his education had been deficient in this respect, and that he would call out if he should lose sight of his companion's elongated and elf-like form.

A dreary passage was that through the vast wood, but the mind of Horace Edleston was on fire; he was absorbed by an all-consuming excitement, and could know little peace until he had examined the ground under the oak in the Dead Man's Clump, and had put the power of the magnetizer to the proof.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ah! now they fight in fiercest file no more.

Hemmed in, cut off, cleft down, and trampled o'er.

Byron.

AT length they came to the open glade, which lay, dew-covered, in the moon's light, and the clump of trees stood out spectral and ghastly.

It was just the sort of place where one could have fancied a murder had been committed, and Mr. Edleston shuddered when he thought of how near he had been to the commission of an awful crime that very day.

"Now, sir, which is the tree, and when and what and how am I to dig?" exclaimed Smart, rousing his employer from a reverie into which he had fallen.

"Dig?" repeated Edleston. "Oh, yes, of course; I had almost forgotten what we came here for. I am absent-minded occasionally. The middle tree is the one—dig all round that, and be careful, for I expect you will find a box buried there."

"What sort and size of a box? One of those that hold dead men's bones?" said the poacher, with a laugh.

"No; a small box. I don't exactly know what it is like, but you must not break it."

"I'll try not to. Hold the light, sir, if you don't mind. It's plaguery work digging in the dark, though I've done it before now."

"How was that?" asked Mr. Edleston, taking up the lantern and letting its light fall on the spot the poacher had selected to start with.

"I'll tell you the yarn; it'll help to while away the time, for this may be a tough and long job, as you don't know where the box is buried. It was nigh upon ten year ago, before you ever thought of coming into the county, sir, when some mates of mine went out into the Long Wood."

"On the Priory estate?"

"That is it. You were pheasant shooting there with Mr. Vanderlyn, sir, only last week."

"How do you know that?" demanded Mr. Edleston. "Because I was getting a few birds on my own account. I heard that you were going to shoot with a party, and I knew the keepers and beaters would all be where there was a chance of picking up a shilling and getting something to eat and drink, and I knew also that all I had to do was to listen to the guns and keep away from them. That was a good day, for I came home with a full bag, sir."

The impudence of the man rather amused Mr. Edleston, who smiled and said:

"Go on."

"When we got into the wood we separated," continued the poacher, "agreeing to meet in a certain place. I had met with pretty good sport, and had my pockets full, when I heard a noise as of a man groaning, just as I was thinking of making off. Going in the direction, I heard a whistle, which I answered, and the next minute I saw Mike Manistery—he's in Australia now, sir, so what I say won't matter much, one way or the other. Mike looked mad; he was standing over the body of a man, with his skull broke in. I could see in a minute the man was dead, for there is something in death you can't mistake, it's so like sleep, only more awful. The dead man was Joe Epps, the keeper, who lived at the Lodge when Mr. Magendie was alive."

"I couldn't help it, Jacob," said Mike, looking at me. "I've got a wife and ten children, and I know it would be seven years' penitence to do this time; it was his life or my liberty. I didn't strike him cowardly; it was a fair fight with sticks, and I won. If you're a man and a friend, help me to make a hole to put him in. Think of the little ones, Jacob, and the wife at home."

"I did think of them, sir, for I had some of my own, bless their hearts, and Mike and me set to work and dug a kind of a rough grave, and put him in, and trod the earth down, and scattered leaves over; then Mike, he burst out crying, and I said a prayer. It was the only one I could remember, and that's how we buried him. He was missed, but, being a strange sort of man, you see, sir, they thought he had gone off somewhere without saying anything, and he was soon forgotten. Well, sir, it's a odd thing, but Mike could never go into that wood again; he gave up poaching, and worked his way out to 'Stralia, where he's done so well that he's sent for his wife and children, and they have written to me to come out and join them, but somehow or other, I could never like Mike after that. There seemed to be red blood on his hand, and it made me shudder to shake it. Hullo!"

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Edleston, looking round, nervously, at this exclamation.

"I think we're coming to the box, sir; my apoplexy against something hard."

"Dig away, then," answered Mr. Edleston, joyfully. A few vigorous strokes sufficed to enable Jacob to bring to light a wooden box. This he dug up, and placed on the grass before Mr. Edleston, who, sinking on his knees, examined it. The box was made of box-wood, which was hard and durable, and it seemed little the worse for having been so long underground. Its shape it was long and narrow, and was secured with a lock, which was rusty with age.

"What next, sir?" asked Smart.

"You must see me to the Priory; I do not know the way. You have done your work well, and shall have the twenty pounds to-night I promised you," answered Mr. Edleston, taking up the box and putting it under his arm.

At that moment they became conscious of not being alone. Human forms seemed to glide towards them from every direction.

"Not so fast, Mr. Edleston, M.P. and J.P., etc.," exclaimed a voice.

"Jaggers!" ejaculated the unhappy man, frustrated again in the moment of triumph.

"At your service. You have cleverly got hold of the box, which will be of incalculable service to its ultimate possessor, but I shall have a word or two to say before you get clear off with it. Fortunately we have arrived just in time. The old woman did not want to tell us where the box was, but I prevailed upon her to do so, as I knew that in you I had no ordinary man to deal with, and when I heard from an informant that you and Mr. Gainford, my late respected employer, were going to have an evening with Count Bosco, the magnetizer, I thought it high time to be up and doing."

"You have played the spy upon me."

"Not exactly; I paid some one else to do so, but it comes to the same thing. That box, if you please."

"Never!" answered Mr. Edleston. "Smart, strike them down!—protect me!—remember what I have promised you!"

"I'll do what I can, sir!"—answered Smart. "But there's such a plaguey lot of them!"

"Fighting is useless. Give up the box and you shall be allowed to depart without a broken head," exclaimed Jaggers.

Mr. Edleston's only reply to this was a blow with his fist, which sent the lawyer's clerk rolling against the trunk of one of the five trees.

Smart laid about him right and left with his bludgeon, as if he had been beset by a lot of keepers while on a poaching expedition.

The gipsies closed in upon their antagonists, and, being at least five to one, the issue of the contest was never for one moment doubtful. In a short time Smart was lying on his back with his head broken, and Mr. Edleston was running away as fast as his legs would carry him, the precious box having been wrested from him by Basil.

How he got home he knew not, but some time past midnight he arrived at the Priory, his clothes torn, his face bleeding, without his hat, covered with mire, and looking so deplorable that the domestic who let him in did not know his own master until he heard him speak.

The gipsies retired to the camp with their prize.

On the following morning the box was opened, and in it was found the confession of the nurse Parsons.

She said that she wished for vengeance against Mr. Magendie because he had accused her of dishonesty; but she was not sure that she should have given way to her wrongful feelings had not Mr. Edleston bribed her to steal her master's child. She did so, but knew no peace after the commission of the crime. Memories tormented her, and she was in continual dread of being found out.

This haunting fear prevented her from living in any town for any length of time, and she became a wanderer and an outcast on the face of the earth.

She stated that certain marks were on the child's person, and that they were known to people whom she named, and that she wished at some future time that the infant might come into its own.

Had she not died as she did, from the effects of a guilty conscience and ill health, possibly she might have done him justice sooner.

There were other papers which Mr. Jaggers took possession of, and expressed himself satisfied that he should be able to establish a case which Mr. Edleston, with all his money, could not resist.

The gipsies congratulated Basil upon his good fortune, and told him that they feared they should lose his society now that he had a chance of becoming wealthy.

He assured them, however, that he would never forget his former friends, and that though he did not like grinding poverty he did not care for riches.

"I should be out of place among gentlemen," he said, "and I would much rather remain as I am now, or have a small farm where I could entertain you all."

"Nonsense, my dear Mr. Leslie Magendie," remarked Jaggers, giving him the designation; "no one in his senses ever yet objected to becoming rich. You can travel and polish yourself up and take your proper position. You are a gentleman by birth—don't forget that."

"I shall not forget that I am indebted for whatever I may have to you," answered Basil. "But I want to talk to you privately. Will you take a walk with me?"

"Gladly," answered the lawyer's clerk.

They quitted the encampment and strolled towards the fields.

"Now, what is it you have on your mind?" said Jaggers. "You can unburden yourself to me."

"I know it, and I will do so freely. I believe that I am, as you tell me, and as the evidence tends to prove, the son of Mr. Magendie; but I do not like the idea of being rich and going into society."

"Ridiculous!"

"Perhaps it may be; but if I had any help it would be different."

"Help?" said Jaggers.

"Yes. For instance, if Miss Edleston would marry me, and so help me into—"

"Oho!" laughed Jaggers, "that is how the cat jumps—eh?"

The young man coloured up to the eyes and blushed like a girl.

"I cannot help it," he said. "But from the first moment I saw her I loved her. She is the most beautiful creature my mind can imagine. I would give anything to make her my wife. My idea is that Mr. Edleston might be induced to compromise with me, and let me marry his daughter, so as to preserve his position, avoid scandal, and keep the estate in his family."

"Not a bad idea, either," answered Jaggers. "But I suppose the lady will have something to say in the matter. If her heart is not hers to give, even to save her father, what then?"

"You think she may be in love?"

"I should consider it very remarkable if she is not, and I should consider it still more wonderful if a young lady, brought up as she has been, should, under any circumstances, consent to give her hand to you."

Basil looked crestfallen.

"You may be right," he said. "It is presumptuous in me to indulge the thoughts that I have communicated to you, and I do not know that I should, after all, respect her if she were to allow herself to be bought; because, after all, I should buy her by offering to restrain legal proceedings. I am rough and uncultivated. The hawk is no fit mate for the dove."

"If you wish it, I will see Mr. Edleston and try him," said Jaggers.

"No. If any one went on that mission it ought to be myself," answered Basil. "Do you go and see what the law will enable you to do for me with regard to the recovery of the property. I give you full power to act for me, and I will see what ought to be done about what I have just spoken to you."

Jaggers went to Elvetham, delighted with the success his plans had met with, and felt sure of being able to establish Basil's claim to the estates.

His first call was upon Mr. Jenkins. Gainford and Jenkins were the rival solicitors in the town, and Jenkins received him courteously.

Having stated the case, and supported it with documentary evidence, Jaggers concluded:

"And now, sir, what do you think of it as it stands?"

"So well," replied the solicitor, "that I will find the sinews of war. I will advance you and the young man, Mr. Leslie Magendie, five hundred pounds, and fight the battle for you."

"That is all I want. You shall have the conduct of the case," replied Jaggers.

"Let the young man leave the gipsies at once, and, taking his right name, stay at the 'Magendie Arms.' We must draw public attention to him, and excite interest in his case. By the way, what sort of a man is he?—uneducated, of course?"

"No. On the contrary, he can read and write, and seems to have given himself the elements of a plain education. He has read standard books, and is remarkably quiet and unassuming in his demeanour."

"Very well. So much the better. He is the more likely to enlist sympathy on his side. I will pay the five hundred pounds this morning into the town bank to your credit. Dress the young man properly, buy him what he requires, and let me see him. Keep him away as much as possible from his old associates, who can do him no possible good just at present."

"Your advice shall be acted upon, sir," answered Jaggers.

And he withdrew, feeling that he was making as great progress as could be wished.

"Edleston will never fight the case," he muttered. "He will cut and run, and we shall take possession. Basil has promised me a handsome reward, amounting in all to a sum large enough to enable me to buy a fine estate, and live like a gentleman for the remainder of my life, so that I have not done badly."

Meantime Basil himself did not feel happy. To see Zoraide was to love her, and he did love her with a romantic affection that time and distance only served to increase.

CHAPTER XV.

And the burden laid upon me
Seemed more than I could bear. *Longfellow.*

A WEEK sufficed to dress Basil, who looked like a gentleman. Every one who saw him declared that he was the image of his father. Several of the inhabitants of Elvetham called upon him at the "Magendie Arms" and wished him success.

Mr. Leslie Magendie was the sensation of the hour, and little else was talked about. His affair was called the Elvetham Romance case, and the local papers startled their readers with glowing paragraphs respecting him.

Jenkins wrote to Mr. Edleston and was referred by that gentleman to his solicitor Gainford.

Whereupon Jenkins wrote again, and threatened proceedings in Chancery, and hinted at an indictment at criminal law for the abduction of the child.

Basil wished to call upon Mr. Edleston with a view to a compromise, but neither Jenkins nor Jaggers would hear of such a thing.

Nevertheless he could not keep away from the Priory. When he took a walk his steps always wandered in that direction; and no knight ever gazed with more fondness upon a bower in which his lady-love dwelt than did he upon the aged towers of the grand old Priory.

One day he had strolled within the precincts of the park, catching a glimpse now and then of the house through the trees, when, in turning the corner of a knoll, he came suddenly face to face with two people.

They were Mr. Edleston and his daughter.

Both looked careworn, the father especially. Since that memorable night in the forest, when the struggle for the box took place and the gipsies were victorious, he had aged several years. There was



[FINDING THE BOX.]

the same sharp, anxious look about his face, but the springy elasticity of his step had gone, and the haughtiness of his manner had vanished.

Both regarded the intruder curiously, and it was evident that they did not recognize him, which circumstance added greatly to the embarrassment of his position.

Raising his hat with a polite bow, he was about to pass on when Zoraide caught sight of the image in the heart, which he wore as an ornament to his watch-chain.

"Look, papa!" she cried. "'Tis he—Basil, the gipsy!"

"Impossible, my dear!" answered Mr. Edleston, trembling violently.

Hearing this remark, Basil advanced and said:

"Since your daughter's penetration has discovered my identity, sir, I will not attempt to conceal that I am, as she says, Leslie Magendie."

"Nonsense. Miss Edleston said Basil the gipsy," answered Mr. Edleston, rudely. "You have to prove your case first, and, if you think you have a right to walk in this park, you'll find yourself mistaken. There are laws respecting trespassers, and I shall put them in force unless I get some of my men to duck you in a horse-pond."

"Oh, papa, do not be rude to him! Please do not have a scene—think of me," pleaded Zoraide.

"The fellow is always prowling about; the first time he was seen he came as a thief in the night!"

Basil's cheek flushed, but he thanked Zoraide with a glance for her kind intercession in his favour.

"I shall not quarrel with you, sir, because I respect the presence of a lady, and I can make some allowance for the irritation of your feelings," he exclaimed. "But I must say you would show better taste if you did not taunt me with an unfortunate passage in my life."

"I don't want to have anything to say to you. Why do you come here? If you can turn me out of the Priory, do it; only don't intrude your hateful presence upon me."

In fact the sight of Basil acted upon Mr. Edleston like a red rag on a bull, and he was white with passion.

"Will you permit me," said Basil, who remained studiously polite, "to so far improve the occasion of this accidental meeting as to hold a private conversation with you?"

"I can hold no conversation with you. I am advised not," answered Mr. Edleston.

"It will be for your good, perhaps for our mutual advantage."

"Very well," cried Mr. Edleston, changing his

mind. "Walk on, Zoraide; this man wants to say something to me in private."

"If Miss Edleston will excuse us for a few minutes," remarked Basil.

"Certainly," said Zoraide, who strolled on, striking the tall blades of grass with her parasol in an abstract manner.

"Now, sir—your business!" exclaimed Mr. Edleston, setting his back against a tree.

This remark recalled Basil to himself. He had been following Zoraide with his eyes, thinking that she looked ravishingly beautiful in the winter morning costume which she wore, and how he longed to make her his darling wife.

"It must be a great blow to you, sir," he began, "to lose this fine property, after becoming the representative of the county, and establishing yourself, as you thought, firmly in such a position."

"But I haven't lost it yet," returned Mr. Edleston, testily. "Nor have you obtained it. You have heard, I suppose, of the glorious uncertainty of the law."

"I am well supported, nevertheless."

"By whom? A second-rate speculative attorney in a provincial town? Pooh!"

"At all events, you would rather stay where you are without law proceedings."

"That is obvious. Do you want to compromise?" said Mr. Edleston, eagerly. "If I suggest a money payment, it must be, as the lawyers say, without prejudice."

"Certainly; but I do not want a money payment."

"What then?"

Mr. Edleston stared at him in bewilderment.

"Hear me calmly," continued Basil. "You may call me presumptuous, but I—I love your daughter."

Mr. Edleston laughed slowly.

"Yes," Basil went on. "I have dared to raise my eyes and my hopes to that paragon of feminine beauty, Miss Edleston. If she could only look kindly upon me, I would devote my life to her service and be your most humble servant."

This was presenting a new outlet of escape from his difficulties to the M.P., and he was not displeased at the unexpected loophole which was put before him, at the eleventh hour as it were.

"You are right to call yourself presumptuous," he said, in his coarse, blunt way. "My daughter is a lady, and has the tastes of a lady, while you are a vagabond and a gipsy, with none of the advantages of education. Yet I do not mind mentioning the matter to my daughter. I cannot tell what answer she will make. I cannot tell whether she will be disposed to sacrifice herself to prevent me having any farther annoyance in this business."

"She might do worse," replied Basil. "You have called me hard names, but what if I were to retort, and say that you incited my nurse to kidnap me?"

"You have to prove it all, I say," answered Mr. Edleston, sharply. "However, I'll talk to Zoraide. You need not say any more now. I see your aim. Give me a call at the Priory in three days, and you shall know more. Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly, and I have the honour to wish you good morning. Accept my thanks," said Basil.

He tendered his hand, but Mr. Edleston pretended not to see it, and strode after his daughter, while the young man walked back towards Elvetham.

"Well," said Zoraide, "have you got rid of him?" when her father was by her side once more.

"Can't you see he has gone?" answered Mr. Edleston.

"I think he is a hateful man, with his dark greasy-looking hair, and his olive-coloured face."

"I'm sorry for that."

"Why?"

"Because you might save me. Whatever I may say in public, I think privately that I have not the ghost of a chance with him. Our reign here is short, unless we make terms with him."

"What can I do?" asked Zoraide.

"Marry him, that's all. He wants you for a wife."

Zoraide laughed merrily.

"Now, papa," she exclaimed, "you must be joking. Marry that man! Why, he is mad; and you cannot be serious in suggesting such a thing to me, when you know that I have engaged myself to Mr. Vanderyn, whom I love, and he is both rich and handsome."

"But consider, my dear," said her father. "If he should marry you, there will be no going to law, and we shall remain at the Priory and keep our position. All that should be thought of."

"Do you really mean it?" asked Zoraide, growing very serious.

"Of course I do. Will not a drowning man catch at a straw?"

"Yes, I suppose so. And will it save you?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I must have time to think. Give me a day, papa, will you?" said Zoraide, in a hard, stony voice.

"Certainly; take two if you like. The fellow is not coming for his answer till the end of the week," replied her father.

They walked home side by side, but it was a melancholy walk for Zoraide, who spoke never a word, though Mr. Edleston talked gaily, for he was in better spirits and his heart rose within him.

(To be continued.)



THE SNAPT LINK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Sybil's Inheritance," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXV.

Thy daughter's dead!

Hope of thine age, thy torchlight's lonely beam!
Who quenched its ray? that blood which one
hath shed?

Hark to that frenzied question of despair!

"HAS Mr. Carstairs come yet, Madeline?" asked a faint voice, that could scarcely have been recognized as that of Eldred Mugrave, once so stern and sonorous in its tone.

The girl thus addressed was sitting by the bedside of the speaker, though half concealed by the heavy curtains of the old oak couch.

"Not yet, my dear sir. Mr. Dacre has gone to fetch him. He could hardly have arrived by this time," she answered, soothingly. "It will not be more than an hour, I should think, before he comes. Could you not sleep a little in the interval?"

"No, girl, no; I have too much to do, and who knows whether I shall have another day spared to me?" was the determined reply.

"But the doctor said your only chance was rest and quiet," remonstrated Madeline, gently.

"The doctor is an idiot," returned the invalid, impatiently, gathering strength, as it were, from his feverish restlessness. "As if there could be rest for me in this world or the next while my Hilda is un-avenged. Child, that killed me, that failure of justice. If he had been condemned, I might have endured on. I tried, tried hard to live to see her blood washed out in the life stream of her murderer. But he escaped me, idiots that they were!"

Madeline shuddered violently.

"Have some softer feelings in your heart, dear sir, if, as you believe, you are on the verge of another world. Suppose you are mistaken? Suppose he is innocent?"

"Girl, you will drive me mad if you talk such odd wives' folly," said the patient, raising himself from his pillows with unwonted strength. "Who else could have been guilty save Rupert and the infatuated girl who would have sold herself to win his love? As well try to persuade me that you were guilty as that he is innocent."

Madeline sprang up from her chair as if stabbed by some unseen dagger and walked to the curtained window.

"This is dreadful—horrible!" she murmured. "And at such a moment."

[LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.]

Then she mastered like an Indian the sudden agony that had galvanized her, and returned with a glass of restorative to the invalid.

"Drink this, dear sir," she said, anxiously; "it will revive you for what you wish to do. And," she murmured, as he returned the glass drained to the bottom, "in mercy to yourself, to all, remember that it is not proved, and leave vengeance to the All Seeing."

"Silence!" he said, sternly, as if the old spirit had given life to his feeble voice. "Child, you have comforted my last days and saved me from madness, but I will not endure that, even from you. Leave me now, and send Aubrey to me."

Madeline slowly obeyed, and walked dreamily from the room with a step far unlike the fairy lightness of other days, yet not more changed than her whole aspect and expression. A veil seemed, as it were, cast over her brilliant beauty, that shadowed yet did not obscure it. The wayward, passionate fitfulness of her mobile features was deepened to a more resolute firmness, the flashing eyes burned with a steadier though not less coal-like brilliance, and her very gait and attitude were matured into a less defiant but more formidable self-reliance in their elfin dignity.

She walked to the library, where she believed Aubrey would be found. Her hand rested for a moment on the lock, as if hesitating to enter.

Then she turned the lock, with a sharp suddenness that made the tenant of the apartment start from his chair, with the nervous trepidation that had pervaded the whole demeanour of the stricken household since the terrible tragedy which had struck terror into its whole atmosphere.

"Ha! Has Dacre returned? Is Carstairs here?" he asked, hurriedly, as he saw Madeline enter.

"No! It would be impossible, unless they had wings," she said, with that slight accent of contempt in her tone under which Aubrey always writhed in secret.

"I thought it very rapid; but then Dacre knew it was life-and-death business after that seizure. I wonder what it really is, Madeline. The doctor talked just professional bosh when I asked him."

"It is a broken heart, Aubrey," she answered, calmly. "The string's snap at last, as poor Hilda's betrothal vows, and from the same hand. Who murdered her has a double sin to answer for," she said, shuddering. "Heaven have mercy!—man cannot in such a crime."

"I cannot think why he wants Carstairs; his will must have been made long since," mused Aubrey, snapping in two a tortoiseshell paper-knife he held in his hand.

But ere she could reply the loud ringing of the bell in the invalid's room summoned the hasty attendance of the young man, and he rushed upstairs with an anxious rapidity that might possibly have some relation to the mystery of the lawyer's expected advent.

"Aubrey," said Mr. Mugrave, feebly, as his son-in-law elect came gently into the room, "I want you to do something that I cannot trust to others. Do you see that table, boy, with its desk and drawers?"

It was a curious and antique piece of furniture that the patient pointed out.

A carved ebony table, with massive legs, twisted into a serpent's shape, coiling round the figures of powerful Newfoundland dogs, whose paws supported the slanting top, with its desk-like shape, and double locks affixed to both ends of the lid.

"Take these keys," said the patient, drawing two linked together from under his pillow; "open the desk by a treble turn, then bring me the papers you will find in the drawer within the recess."

Aubrey obeyed, but his fingers trembled so strangely that some moments elapsed ere he could open the singular wards of the patented locks.

The drawer in question was concealed behind a sort of deep lid that, when raised, revealed two small knobs, which appeared at first like mere ornaments to a smooth inlaid surface, and again Aubrey paused.

"Press them, press them!" exclaimed Mr. Mugrave, eagerly.

The young man hastily obeyed the imperious bidding.

The knobs were hard from long disuse, and it needed a determined and prolonged pressure to make them act. But at length he succeeded, though not till the eager invalid had repeatedly called, in angry impatience at the delay.

Then the drawers were revealed of which Mr. Mugrave spoke, and the papers he so anxiously demanded were exposed to view.

"Bring them, bring them!" he exclaimed; "quick, quick!"

Aubrey obeyed, gathering the various documents as rapidly as possible, and carrying them in his arms to the bed.

It was wonderful to see the sharpness of the dimmed eyes flashing out as they were fixed on the papers thus spread before him.

One—a parchment document—he at once selected from the remaining and less ponderous papers.

"Take this," he said, hastily giving it into Aubrey's hands. "Quick, quick!—tear it, and put it in the fire! It is my will," he added, seeing Aubrey's ill-

concealed hesitation, "and it is useless now, useless! It arranged for Hilda's marriage with yourself, and disposed of all, in that event. It is very different now."

Still Aubrey paused.

"Pardon me, dear sir, but one moment ere I do your bidding. Suppose there was no will—none—would not your property go to your relative, De Vere?"

A sardonic laugh—fearful to listen to, at such a place and time—came from the invalid.

"No, no!—no chance, no chance! Boy, it is a secret, but he is base-born, and could not inherit. There, burn, burn, quickly!"

Aubrey tore the crackling parchment into strips, and placed it in the fire, where it blazed and hissed as if it was indignantly protesting against its fate.

Meanwhile Mr. Mugrave was looking, as eagerly as his exhausted strength would permit, on the other papers brought to him, two or three of which he vainly strove to open with his trembling fingers, and endeavoured, to tear, ere he committed them to Aubrey's grasp.

One had already been torn in pieces, and held out to the young man, who proceeded in the same process of destruction, when the violent clang of the hall bell announced the arrival of some fresh guests at the Mount.

"Go, go!—quick!—it is Carstairs, and moments are precious!" exclaimed the invalid. "Do you hear, boy?" he said, as Aubrey hesitated; "go, this instant!"

"Pardon, pardon! I only waited to close again this table," said Aubrey, deprecatingly.

"Send Madeline; she can do it; then bring them here at once—at once, and pen and ink! Mind, quick, quick!"

Mr. Mugrave was literally shaking within, at once, and Aubrey was faint as he obeyed another instant had passed.

The invalid crushed the papers jealously within the bed as he went out.

"Presently," he murmured, "presently will do—when that is over."

Madeline, almost as Aubrey descended the stairs, re-entered the room with the news of the anxiously expected arrival, and the patient hastily ordered her to lock the open repository and bring him the keys, though there scarcely appeared any cause for securing the now empty drawers.

She had scarcely accomplished the deed, and delivered the keys to the trembling fingers, when the door opened, and Mr. Carstairs was ushered into the apartment by Aubrey LeStrange.

"Leave us, leave us!" said the invalid, quickly.

Madeline glided away like a spirit ere Aubrey could even attempt to arrest her progress, and shut herself up in her chamber; not far from that of Mr. Mugrave, and her disappointed lover descended once again to the library, where Philip Dacre was sitting as coolly as if he had not just returned from a lightning-like journey of speed that was then well nigh miraculous.

"Well, LeStrange, the deed is done, eh? I wonder how all these comfortable surroundings and all the wealth that bought them will be left," he said, coolly.

"Who can tell? The old fellow seems well nigh distraught; I hardly think any will made now would stand," replied Aubrey.

"Stuff, man; don't entertain any such absurdity, whatever is the result," said Dacre, calmly. "His brains are as right as mine; it's the heart that's in fault, and in more ways than one, or I'm deceived."

"I do not understand you," replied Aubrey, in an embarrassed tone.

"It is easily explained; I believe the old fellow drove De Vere frantic by his sneering taunts. And, if he did the deed, I'll wager it's half the father's sin after all."

"If!—do you doubt it?" asked Aubrey, fiercely.

"It is not proved. We lawyers never take such cases for granted. A man is innocent till he is found guilty, in our opinion."

"You're enough to drive a man to commit suicide by your detestably cool style of talking," said LeStrange, with a forced smile. "It's a pity you were not called to the bar in time for the case."

"If I had been I should assuredly have refused it," said Philip Dacre, more earnestly than was his wont.

"From which side?"

"From either! There is a mystery over the affair that may one day be cleared up, but which might be as awkward for the friends as the foes of the prosecutor in the case," returned Dacre, coolly.

The eyes of the young men met.

LeStrange's were glittering like a tiger's—Philip's deep-set orbs cool and keen as polished steel.

"What have I said to excite your indignation, Mr. Aubrey LeStrange?" said Dacre, carelessly.

"You forget when you talk so absurdly that the murdered girl was to have been my bride," was the half-choking reply.

"I forget nothing, and I may presume you also have sense enough to remember nothing that does not please you," answered Philip, sardonically. "Madeline Cleveland, for instance, and the wrongs you were contemplating to her and to the poor girl we are speaking of so calmly. You can scarcely expect me to believe in the extreme delicacy of your feelings when I knew all that episode, Master Aubrey."

There was silence for some minutes, then Philip resumed:

"By the way, LeStrange, you must excuse me for touching on another phase of the subject. Now that this old fellow is dying, the home thus given to Miss Cleveland will be again closed. What is to be done for her future maintenance and shelter? I know pretty well that she would scarcely accept any from you, even were you in circumstances to offer it, which I very much doubt."

"Do you suppose she would take them from Mr. Philip Dacre?" asked Aubrey, savagely enough.

"I know that he would be a pluckier fellow than I am who would try it on," returned Dacre, coolly, "yet do you mean the girl to be without support or home when you have deprived her of her maintenance of both?"

Aubrey withheld under his friendly lash like a beaten hound, but for the moment he dared not resent the look and tone that cut into his very heart's core.

"It remains to be seen, Dacre, what this blessed will which the old fellow is so determined to make will prove to be. He has taken a great fancy to Madeline. Perhaps he will provide for her."

"He chose you for his son-in-law, yet I should be very sorry to stake my first brief on your heritage," returned Philip, coolly.

"Has he told you? Do you know what he is going to do?" asked the young man, hurriedly.

"He has told me nothing. I certainly was unprepared for this morning's seizure, and Carstairs has as much idea what it will produce as your Arabian mare. Take what I say for what it is worth. A very little time will prove its truth or falsehood."

Aubrey had never detected his friend in a falsehood. Perhaps it was a boast he could scarcely make for himself.

Even now when his suspicions were excited he felt it impossible to discredit Philip's words.

"It is all very well gibing at a fellow in this way, Dacre," he said, angrily, "but I'd like you to put yourself in my place, and tell me what you'd do, when the girl's so hatefully proud, and won't accept the slightest favour a man can offer."

"Possibly I should decidedly object to occupying your place," returned Philip, coolly. "But if you ask me what you can do, there is one mode I can suggest of getting Miss Cleveland to accept some means of necessary support. Those diamonds, for example, which were her right. Have you restored them to her now that unluckily you have no farther use for them?"

Aubrey blanched under his friend's gaze.

"They will be in her possession ere many hours are over," he returned. "If it had not been for this sudden illness of the old gentleman's I'd have arranged for it to-day. He has put out all my calculations you see."

Philip was about to reply when Reynolds entered with the decorously long face that belongs to the house of death and mourning.

"Please, Mr. Dacre, will you come and witness the will, sir?" he said. "You and the clerk are to sign, sir, Mr. Carstairs says."

"A very uncomfortable proof that I am not remembered in the said testament," observed Philip, caustically, as he prepared to follow the butler from the room. "Cheer up, LeStrange, there is evidently some hope for you yet."

He quitted the room in obedience to the impatient sign made by the domestic functionary.

Aubrey leaned back in his chair with hands clasped in pain as he waited for some indication of what was passing in that silent dwelling. He would have given much for a voice—a step—for aught to disturb his foreboding thoughts.

Death—death seemed around him in all shapes. He was ill prepared to abide its shadow.

It was perhaps scarcely more than a quarter of an hour, though to him it appeared at least four times that space, when Dacre and the lawyer re-entered the room.

"Well?" he asked, eagerly. "It is all done?"

"It is all done," returned Philip, gravely. "The will is signed, sealed, and in this good gentleman's keeping," pointing to Carstairs. And, he added, in a more subdued voice, "the testator has gone to his account, where there will be little rock of his will or intentions, I suspect."

"Dead?" whispered Aubrey, in a subdued tone.

"Dead!" echoed Philip. "Almost ere we had put

our names to the will he sank back and was gone with scarcely a sigh or a sob! A peaceful end to a most uneasy life, so far as I comprehend his history."

It was too true.

Madeline Cleveland had been hastily summoned to the chamber of death, which she had so recently quitted. Brief space had sufficed to draw up that new and mysterious document, whose contents yet remained to be revealed, and less still to confirm it by signatures and witnesses.

She, the comparative stranger, who but a few months before had been unknown even in name, was the only one to close the eyes of the unconscious corpse and place with decent reverence the helpless limbs.

It brought back painfully the dreadful morning when she had last seen the yet more thrilling spectacle of Hilda Mugrave's beautiful and livid features, and a shudder ran through her frame as she moved and cowered with timid touch the exposed and shrunken hands of the unhappy father.

There was a rustling of papers as she placed them within the coverlet, and with half-involuntary instinct she drew forth the object which occasioned the startling noise.

It was crumpled as if it had been hurriedly thrust within the bed, but Madeline saw that it was two or three unfolded papers which appeared to have been taken from a yellow and worn envelope crushed up with them. She did not pause in that awe-striking moment to examine their character or contents, but placed them hastily in her dress, then, summoning Mrs. Hesper to her aid, she gave a few brief directions for the melancholy rite, and hastily left the room.

Madeline returned to her own apartment with a deep and heavy sadness which she could scarcely have believed could be excited by a comparatively stranger's death.

But it was no ordinary position in which that low girl was placed by the departure of the unhappy father of Hilda Mugrave.

Deprived even of name and fame, yet with lips as quick as to her wrongs, which would in truth only be made public by complaint—peniless, friendless—with not one whom she could trust to shelter or counsel her, and with a terrible and guilty secret in her bosom—it was small wonder if Madeline Cleveland gave vent to a pang of despair when the safe though gloomy refuge which Eldred Mugrave had offered to her was suddenly snatched from her weary spirit. It must be for herself alone to act, to think in this extremity.

She could trust no one—no one.

Perhaps Philip Dacre had more of her confidence and trust than any other human being. He had aided her once, and kept her secret well, but then he was the sworn friend of Aubrey LeStrange, and she could not place confidence in the intimate of one so perfidious and so base.

The very atmosphere seemed full of deceit and treachery to her excited imaginings. She must be sufficient to herself alone.

As these thoughts rushed through her mind the remembrance of the papers that had been so singularly placed in her power occurred to her. Even these she could not venture to deliver up unseen, as she might have been prompted to do. She drew them from her pocket and examined them one by one.

Her eyes rested thoughtfully on their contents with a perplexed air, as if she could not altogether make any deduction from their meaning.

"I will keep them nevertheless," she said, replacing them in her dress for security. "It may be that they signify some important truth, affect some vital interests—at any rate, I dare not trust them to any one till I comprehend better their meaning."

It was a sad and gloomy day at Rose Mount.

Once again the windows were darkened; once again the steps of the inhabitants moved stealthily about the halls and staircases, as when its helress lay in her death robes. But now there was no one of his own kith and kin to weep for the dead. Only strangers closed his eyes and preserved a demure gravity at his end.

His only child had been snatched from him—it might be from the fruit of his own headstrong bitterness and pride—and his nearest living relatives had been driven from his presence, hiding from the sight of man, with the dark stain of blood on their name, and the sword of justice hanging over their heads.

Truly the sins of life were visited on the head of Eldred Mugrave in his death.

CHAPTER XXVI.

What strange events can strike with more surprise than those which lately struck thy wondering eyes? Yet, taught by them, confess the Almighty just, And where you cannot fathom learn to trust.

THE last honours had been paid to the dead. A train of plumed hearse and coaches filled with the friends and acquaintances of the deceased had been

followed by dependents and domestics, who stood round the grave with solemn if not mournful faces; and the arms of his race were graven on his coffin, and he slept with his father and with the child who had gone before him to the grave.

Then the funeral train returned to the closed dwelling, and refreshments were served; and the more ceremonious guests departed, leaving, but the more immediate members of the household to listen to the remaining part of the ceremonies, the reading of the lately made and mysterious will.

Mr. Carstairs took his place at the table, round which assembled Aubrey LeStrange; Philip Dacre, Madeline Cleveland, the physician of the deceased, and one or two of the more intimate friends who since their own youth had known him as an honoured and long-descended member of the circle of county families.

Mr. Carstairs had an expression of troubled embarrassment on his face, very unlike the usual grave formality of his profession on so stereotyped an occasion.

When all was fully arranged, and a dead silence pervaded which could scarcely have been more profound had no human hearts been throbbing with expectation in the room, he cleared his throat and began.

"I should preface the duty which I have to perform," he said, gravely, "by stating that the document I am about to read is of a most singular nature, which can only be accounted for, and, I may say, justified by the melancholy circumstances in which it was framed. I may also add that I am thoroughly convinced that my deceased client was in entire possession of his faculties when it was dictated—an opinion in which I am borne out by Doctor Fox, who was in constant attendance. I am not only justified but desired to make its contents public, or I might perhaps have wished the circle narrowed of those who are about to listen to its singular provisions."

It would be difficult to paint the varying expressions of the listeners to Mr. Carstairs's exciting preamble.

Philip Dacre's calm, keen scrutiny of the two who might be supposed to be most especially concerned contrasted with the anxious flush in Aubrey LeStrange's haggard features, and the pale, troubled suspense which Madeline's expressive face betrayed.

In the countenances of the less interested spectators, and the principal domestics who had been permitted to attend the ceremonial, was unmitigated curiosity, which could scarcely be restrained even by the solemnity of the occasion.

At last Mr. Carstairs, whose manner honestly bespoke a reluctance to proceed which is too often feigned in such emergencies, commenced to read the brief document. It ran thus:

"I, Eldred Murgave, being sound of mind, though in a dying state of body, do make and devise the following provisions for my personal and real property after my demise, revoking by so doing all former wills, settlements, and codicils whatever:

"I devise and place in trust, in the hands of Stephen Mortmain, Esq., of Braise Castle, of Charles Carstairs, Esq., of Lincoln's Inn, and of Philip Dacre, Esq., of Dacre Court, the whole of my real and personal property of any kind whatever, to be held in trust by them for the person about to be described.

"For whereas it is my fixed belief that there has been a miscarriage of justice in failing to discover the murderer of my beloved daughter, Hilda Murgave, and, as my very spirit cannot rest till her blood is avenged, I make the following provisions for that sacred purpose.

"The said trustees whom I have named are hereby instructed and empowered to hold the said property till the criminal who committed the heinous, cruel deed shall be convicted and brought to justice; then they shall make it over without let or hindrance to that person who may bring to light the mystery, and prove the guilt.

"Should there be any second person or persons aiding and instrumental in proving the said crime, and bringing the criminal to justice, then the sum of ten thousand pounds severally and respectively shall be paid to him, her, or them before the transfer of such estates and money.

"I have not named Aubrey LeStrange, the intended bridegroom of my beloved child, as a trustee in this matter, since he is the most deeply interested person in the search for the criminal, and I may express my earnest hopes that he may be the successful prosecutor of the wretched being in question, and the future master of the estates and wealth, which he lost by the fearful crime.

"(Signed) ELDRD MURGAVE.

"(Witnesses) PHILIP DACRE,

"JOHN RYLANDS."

Mr. Carstairs paused, and the dead silence that followed was the best evidence of the sensation created by that most extraordinary document.

Madeline had buried her face in her hands, so that no one could read the expression of her mobile features, but her small figure trembled visibly, though she shrank back as it were into the cushions of the sofa, where she sat to conceal the ague-like shiver that pervaded her whole being.

There was a livid whiteness in Aubrey's skin, though he abstained from any other proof of agitation; and it might well be supposed that the subject of that document would chill the very blood of the elect husband of the murdered girl.

The remainder of the group exchanged glances, and the gentlemen named as trustees looked doubtfully at the solicitor.

"It is really so remarkable a trust," observed Mr. Mortmain, "that I scarcely know whether to accept it or not; though as one of the hereditary friends, as I may say, of the Murgave family, and deeply sympathizing with their affliction, and horrified at the crime which occasioned it, I would willingly show my regard and pity in any possible way. Pray, what would be the duties of such a trust, Mr. Carstairs?"

"Very simple ones in reality, though they may present a more alarming and repelling aspect in idea," returned the lawyer, quietly.

"I mean to say that if it involved any kind of dirty work, and making oneself into an amateur detective, I should decidedly decline the offer," returned Mr. Mortmain.

"By no means, Mr. Mortmain. You would have nothing to do but hold and take proper oversight of the property in conjunction with Mr. Dacre and myself till the provisions of the will are fulfilled. There can be no difficulty in deciding where a court of justice has given a verdict in so plain and simple a provision as the present."

"Hum! Well, there is something in that. What do you say, Mr. Dacre? You are a young man to have such a trust reposed in you; but I presume your name is inserted as having been so much mixed up with this unhappy business. Had you any hint of the intention of the deceased?" he added, with a sharp glance at Philip's calm features.

Madeline's hands were withdrawn from her face as the gentleman spoke, and her eyes were bent on Dacre with a piercing inquiry in their bright depths.

"Not the shadow of one," was the firm reply, in tones that brought conviction with them. "And, what is more, I shall certainly take some time to consider my decision before I accept the singular trust."

"Right—quite right, my dear sir," exclaimed Mr. Mortmain, approvingly. "And if Mr. Carstairs can remain at Rose Mount for the next twenty-four hours, we can settle everything finally before he leaves, in all respects. Such a remarkable behest is like a clap of thunder on one."

"I certainly cannot refuse Mr. Mortmain such a reasonable demand, though it may put me to some inconvenience," returned the lawyer. "Shall we name twelve o'clock to-morrow for another meeting here?"

"Say two. I don't care to set off immediately after breakfast on a long ride, and I daresay my old friend Mrs. Harper will have some luncheon to strengthen us under the responsibility," returned Mr. Mortmain, rising, with a look of relief and a twitch in his good-humoured face that proved once more how easy it is to be calm and philosophical under the misfortunes of others. "Now," he added, "I think that we have done all that is possible to-day, and had better leave our good friends here in peace."

The proposition was at once adopted, and the domestics hastily retired from the room, quickly followed by the few guests who had witnessed the singular scene.

Aubrey LeStrange, as a kind of temporary host, accompanied them to the hall; and Philip and Madeline were left alone.

He approached her with a noiseless caution, that spoke of desire to avoid the slightest chance of betrayal in this moment.

"Madeline," he said, in a low voice, "what shall I do?"

She looked sharply up at him with a startled gaze. "I—I do not comprehend you, Mr. Dacre," she said, faintly.

"Then I will explain myself so far. Tell me what is your wish. Shall I accept this trust or not?"

"How can I decide? What right have I to guide your actions, Mr. Dacre?" she said, more collectedly.

"You have the right," he replied, "of a deeply injured woman over an honourable man's actions and his sympathies, where they concern you."

"And you—you believe this concerns me?" she said, with a dark trouble in her eyes and quivering lips.

"I do," he answered, firmly. "Nay, listen to me, Madeline. I ask nothing of confidence from you. I tell you but the belief I hold without even demanding from you the slightest confirmation of its truth. But

I do strongly suspect that you know more than any of us as to this foul crime, and if I can help you, if I can ease your sufferings in any way, you shall command my services. Madeline, my lips are sealed in many respects; but, at least, I can tell you that. And if you believe me—if you can confide in my truth and power—prove it by expressing your decision in this business. I will accept or refuse this trust at your bidding."

Madeline's eyes had been bent on the floor as he spoke, and her foot beat nervelessly on the cushion where it rested; but as he ceased she looked up, and the brilliant flash of gratitude that beamed from her whole face might well have conquered and repaid a deeper service than that he proffered.

"You are good and noble," she said. "I did not believe there was such faith left in man. I thought all were false and deceitful as the—well, it matters not. It is some relief to find one who neither despises nor frowns upon the despised Pariah—the impostor—the lonely orphan outcast on the world!"

"Thanks—thanks for your confidence," he resumed. "Now—quick—time presses and I hear footsteps returning! Can you decide now, or afterwards—on reflection?"

"No, no. I need no reflection," she said, sadly.

"Mr. Dacre, I neither confess nor deny your suspicions. Heaven alone knows how this terrible business may end—who will have to suffer, and on whom the shame and sin may fall. But, in any case, you will do your duty, you will be true and just, and I had rather you hold the power and the trust reposed in you than any other human being. But, oh, Mr. Dacre, it is a dreadful thing to die with vengeance in the heart and on the lips! There seems to be an evil fate attending this unhappy house, and even the blood that has been shed cannot wash it out."

Philip was about to reply, but the rapid approach of footsteps arrested his words, and Madeline gilded from the room as Aubrey LeStrange re-entered it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The iron may come in and pierce thy soul,
But cannot till the love within thee burning;
The tears of misery—thy bitter dole—
Can never quench thy true heart's restless yearning.

"I SHALL not be very long, Gertrude, but I have had a notice from Trafalgar Square that my pictures are actually at a premium," said Mr. Thorne, with hat and cane in hand, entering the studio where his pupil was busily engaged in her new service.

"I am glad. Do not hurry on my account," she said, with a vague feeling of relief at his approaching absence. "I never feel alone while these are round me."

And she pointed to the world of art that covered the walls.

"You prefer their society to mine then, Gertrude," said Mr. Thorne, wistfully gazing at Gertrude's pensive face.

"Surely you would not be compared to a picture," she said, evasively. "That were indeed a poor compliment in one sense, though not in others," she added, smiling with wintry playfulness.

"I would deem anything a flattering joy that proved your pleasure in my presence, Gertrude," returned Bernard, gazing at her with that look which always brought an uneasy throb to her heart. "I would be all to you of joy and happiness."

"You are my only friend; I am grateful, most grateful," she replied, gently.

"I would have more than gratitude, be more to you than a friend," he replied, impetuously. "Can you not forget my age, forget all but that our tastes are in common, my heart fresh as it was long years ago, and that you have, as you say, no one else to care for and love you, Gertrude?"

It was out at last, that pent-up passion, that ill-restrained longing for a look and word of love from the fair young girl, that eager panting to clasp her to his heart and call her his own.

She shrank back timorously, there was little response to his fervent hopes and wishes in that involuntary recoil, that pleading, deprecating look.

"Please do not talk so. It pains me. I cannot feel anything but deep and grateful friendship. I never think of aught else," she replied, shaking her head sadly.

"Would you not prefer a lawful home, a shelter and a protector, to which and to whom you had a rightful claim? Could you not be happy as my wife, Gertrude?"

Gertrude started painfully.

She had sometimes feared that her new patron cherished for her a warmer, tenderer love than she could ever reciprocate. She had instinctively perceived its expression, shrunk from his looks, his touch with a dread that might be timidity or repugnance according to the interpretation of its object.

But it had never occurred to her that the man who in years might have been her father, who knew her

helplessness, to whom she had more than hinted her disgrace and danger, could dream of such an unnatural link between them.

"I cannot, indeed I cannot be your wife, or any man's," she returned, slowly and sadly.

"Why not?"

"I would never take to my husband a stained hand, a suspected guilt," she said, more resolutely.

"Is that your sole objection?"

She was silent. She could not stain her lips with falsehood, even in that crisis.

"I need not even think of any other," she replied.

"I would not marry any one now, and I do not even wish to think or speak of such useless dreams."

"But if I care not for this fancied obstacle—if I feel able to disregard all but the happiness you could bring me, would that not be enough if you loved me, my child—my love?"

"No," she replied, firmly, "no. It would not. The more dearly I loved a man the more resolved I would be not to take shame to his name and hearth. Please say no more, unless you would drive me an exile again on the world," she pleaded, touchingly.

"Gertrude, will you tell me one thing that will give me more patience and peace?" returned Bernard, fiercely. "Have you ever loved?—do you love even now any one—any happier man?"

She needed not to reply, for the tell-tale blood flooded over her face in flaming crimson, and the blush she held dropped from her hand.

"This is unmanly—cruel!" she exclaimed, passionately. "Am I such a slave that my very thoughts and feelings are not my own? Is it not enough that I have told you from my very heart that I would not wed any man on earth under my present ban? Let me go," she added, impetuously turning towards the door. "Better death itself than such insult—such tyranny!"

"Hush, hush! Calm yourself and listen to me, proud, impetuous girl," said Bernard, laying his hand on her arm. "If you really have loved, or do love in vain, then you can surely estimate and feel for such torturing pain, and comprehend its workings. I see it all; and it must be only time and patience that can carry out my fixed purpose. Child, if love can win you, can make you happy, or shield you from sorrow and hardship, mine is that devoted affection. The day may come when you will value and accept it."

"No, no—never!" trembled on her white lips, but perhaps did not actually find vent in words.

There was a power in his appeal that carried at once pity and fear to the heart of one who had so fatally tested the reality and power of such deep passion.

"I do value—I do pity it! What can I do more?" she said, piteously.

"You can do this much, Gertrude; you can strive to forget; you can crush down the hopeless past, and do your best to reconcile yourself to the lot that is offered to you," replied Bernard, firmly. "I am no boy lover to lose all self-control, to refuse to watch and wait. So long as I have no provocation, no rival to gall and exasperate me, I will give you the time you require. But should you give me cause to complain, should you fan the fire of jealousy or despair, I will not answer for myself. You might rue the day when you threw away a friend and a shelter, Gertrude Lindsay."

He turned to leave the room as he spoke, then came back, and, hastily stooping down, touched her brow with his lips.

"Do not add to a life of pain and sorrow—do not take from me my only joy, my only sunbeam!" he whispered. "I will give you time, love, kindness—only try to love me, my heart's darling!"

With a deep sigh, heaved from his very heart, he walked from the room, and Gertrude soon heard the door close behind him as he left the house.

Poor girl! she did but too keenly comprehend the galling, fiery agony of unreturned and deep-seated passion. She had seen it, felt it—alas, had it not brought shame and guilt and misery on her and all who were connected with that one great episode of her young life? Only her own conscience could tell how deeply she had shared in the tragedy which had been enacted. But in any case the murdered Hilda, the accused Rupert, and her own fugitive danger and disgrace were facts that needed no light to prove their reality and their horror.

Now she was again persecuted by that ever-recurring, over-haunting spell. The very gratitude she had displayed, the candour she had shown, the efforts she had made to enter into her patron's tastes, to emulate his skill and please his proud ambition, had brought this danger on her.

What must she do? Should she fly once again, cast off the protection which was so dear to her young and feminine nature; go forth in the world alone, unfriended, penniless, to pine and suffer and die, even should no worse fate befall her?

Such were the reflections that haunted the mind of Gertrude Mugrave in her solitude, so completely engrossing to her senses that she sat before her canvas, staring unconsciously at her model, unmindful of time and sounds and lights, of all but her own perplexing grief.

There was a ring at the gate bell, but she took little heed of its occurrence.

A glance at the timepiece told her that it was impossible Mr. Thorne could have returned in that time from Trafalgar Square, and she presumed of course that no one would be admitted in his absence.

There was some colloquy, some apparent remonstrance between the servant and the applicant for admission, but still the girl attributed it to the eagerness of some enraged customer at finding the artist absent.

It was not till she heard rapid steps coming up the stairs towards the studio that she began to feel the nervous trepidation which any sense of insecurity induces at the slightest unusual movement or sound.

She started up and hastened towards the door, hoping to escape ere too late. Then she perceived by the sounds the too-near neighbourhood of the intruder, whoever he might be, and was fain to shrink back, hoping that he might be conducted to Mr. Thorne's private room on the same floor.

But she was deceived. The handle of the door rattled ominously, it opened sharply, and admitted—Rupert de Vere!

(To be continued.)

LIFE'S SHADOWS.

CHAPTER XLIX.

TESSA, hidden in the hall doorway just out of Piccadilly, panting and trembling, her eyes peering out wildly in the fear of being discovered by her pursuing enemy, waited as the doomed prisoner waits for the tolling of his death-knell.

She heard Captain Holm come nearer and nearer with fleet, uneven tread—nearer, nearer. He slackened his steps at the corner of the street into which Tessa had turned, and peered down into its shadows.

The girl crouched closer in the dark doorway, her heart in her throat. A wild prayer went up from her soul to Heaven that her enemy might pass her by.

That prayer was answered. After a moment's irresolution and indecision, Captain Holm sped on down Piccadilly, leaving the crouching girl in a present safety.

For some time Tessa crouched among the shadows of the doorway incapable of thought, her heart beating fiercely, and a great pulse throbbing in her brain. But after a little she grew calmer, and began to think what she should do.

She could not go to Kentish Town; her reason assured her that Holm would seek her there. She dared not go back to the New Kent Road, lest her enemy should search for her there.

She had money, but what hotel-keeper would receive a young girl at that hour, arriving on foot, alone and empty-handed? She could not return to Sydenham until the morning. What, in the meantime, was she to do?

Never in all her young life had Tessa so comprehended the meaning of those words of Hood's poem:

"In that whole city-full, home she had none!"

But she must do something, she said to herself, desperately. So, gathering herself up, she crept forth, and glided along the wet street. She wandered till her strength utterly failed her, and she could go no farther.

Somewhere near where High Holborn is joined to Oxford Street she came to a halt, and her wandering gaze detected a doorway of a shop that had once been a private house. There were two large columns on each side of the doorway, forming behind them a dark and sheltered little nook, into which, no doubt, many a friendless, homeless creature had found refuge in the night. Tessa crept towards this shelter, and hid herself behind two of the columns, and sat there shrinking, trembling, and frightened.

The hours were on. Whatever of joy or gladness, of peace and security, her future life might bring her, Tessa Holm would never forget the desolateness, the utter dreariness, the terrors of that night in the street. To her natural charity and benevolence was added, in those dreary hours, a tenderness for the poor, and friendless that should bring forth glorious and bountiful fruit in the future.

The clocks sounded the hours of eleven and twelve. Before they struck one the young wanderer had fallen into a fitful sleep, from which she did not awaken for hours.

The winter morning, cold and wet, had dawned grayly when Tessa opened her eyes with a start, not knowing where she was. But memory came back at the sight of a woman with a baby in her arms

crouching behind the opposite columns, and fast asleep.

The girl's limbs felt rigid, and her head ached, but she must be astir. Taking from her pocket a small handful of silver coins, she dropped them softly into the lap of the sleeping woman, and crept out of the doorway into the street.

The omnibuses were running; Tessa signalled one, and was borne to the London Bridge railway station.

Here she alighted, entered the station, her veil over her face, ascertained the time of departure of the earliest train, and made her way into the refreshment-room, where she procured a cup of strong coffee and some sandwiches.

About seven o'clock, having seen nothing of her enemies, Tessa departed in the train for Sydenham.

On arriving at her home station, as it was yet early, she set out to walk to The Dingle. The fresh country air revived her, but she was very pale and weary when she rang the garden bell at the villa, and was admitted into the grounds and came slowly up the garden paths to the house.

Mrs. Hamlyn, clad in a flannel dressing-gown, was standing at her bedroom window as Tessa entered the garden, and her keen eyes did not fail to note the drooping figure, the want of elasticity in the step, the weary carriage of the proud young head, and the wrinkled and forlorn-looking garments of the young governess.

"There is something wrong with that girl," muttered the astute widow. "She looks as if she had been up all night. I have been too unsuspicious about her, but I'll make inquiries before I go much farther."

Tessa entered the house and went up to her own room. Tired as she was, she had no thought of shirking her duties upon this day, and at the usual hour began the instruction of her wearisome pupils.

Meanwhile Mrs. Hamlyn attired herself, with the assistance of her maid, in an elaborate morning robe, and partook of her breakfast in her dressing-room.

The breakfast tray had been carried out when the morning post-bag was brought in. The widow unlocked it with her own key and looked over its contents.

There was a letter addressed to Miss Tessa Holm. "From some of her people," said Mrs. Hamlyn, scanning the letter curiously. "It is the first she has had since she came into this house, which is singular, I must say."

A closer examination of the missive caused her to turn pale. The handwriting of the address was evidently disguised, but the widow suddenly perceived something familiar about the formation of the letters.

"It's from Albert—from my own son!" she murmured. "What has he to say to her? I must know. I am his mother, and I have a right to open the letter!"

Without waiting to reason on the matter, or to consider the question of right and wrong, Mrs. Hamlyn tore open the letter, and hastily read it. It proved to contain an offer of marriage from her gushing and callow son, and proposed an elopement to Tessa. The young man had apparently not considered the possibility of rejection, for he declared that he should procure a special licence that very day, and entreated Tessa to meet him on the evening of the next day, at eight o'clock, just outside the garden wall of The Dingle.

The letter concluded with a protestation that Tessa was all the world to the writer, and that they would "outwit the old lady," and be married "in spite of her."

The portly widow actually gasped like a drowning person, as she finished this delectable epistle. Mother-like, she laid all the blame of the proposed elopement upon innocent Tessa, who would have been shocked at the very thought of a stolen marriage with any one, in addition to which she detested Mr. Albert Hamlyn as every sensible, clear-headed girl must detest a man of his stamp.

"It's all her fault!" cried the widow. "She has made Albert infatuated with her. If I send her packing, he will follow her. But if I can prove her unworthy, or frighten her into silence and retirement, he may forget her."

Acting upon this idea, she sat down at her writing-desk and wrote a brief letter to the Misses Lacy, asking for full particulars concerning Miss Tessa Holm, who was now in her family as governess, and with whom, she stated with asperity, she must say she was not well satisfied. She desired to know, in particular, if Miss Holm was possessed of flirting propensities, or of a scheming mind, as she had already made considerable trouble in the hitherto happy family at The Dingle.

By return of post came a letter from the Misses Lacy, repudiating all commendation of Tessa, and giving her father's address.

This letter nearly threw Mrs. Hamlyn into a fit of hysterics.

The quiet, high-bred young lady whom she had received into her home as the governess of her young daughters—she leaped to the conclusion—a bold, unwomanly girl, with the inclinations of an adventuress. She was a runaway daughter, flying from the protection of a kind father whose over-indulgence had spoiled her.

"She will ruin my girls," cried the widow, in alarm. "She will teach them to become disobedient, bold, and forward. She will marry my son before my eyes. How could I have taken such a creature into my house? It is well that I have learned her true character, and discovered a way to put her beyond Albert's reach and knowledge."

Accordingly the worldly widow wrote a letter—she did not care to trust a telegraphic despatch, since that might provoke comment in her household—to Captain Holm, informing him that his daughter was at The Dingle, Sydenham, and requesting him to "come and fetch her."

It was on the morning of the day after Tessa's return to The Dingle, some thirty-six hours later than her exciting experience in London, that this second letter of Mrs. Hamlyn was despatched. The widow consulted a time-table and made a mental calculation at what hour Captain Holm would arrive, and, a little in advance of that time, she sent Tessa to walk with her charges in the direction of the Crystal Palace.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when, in response to her summons, Captain Holm, attended by Squire Todthely, arrived at The Dingle. They were admitted and shown into the library, into the presence of Mrs. Hamlyn, who, attired in mourning relieved by plentiful jet, received them with graciousness.

"I have sent Miss Holm out to walk with the children," said Mrs. Hamlyn, when the interview had progressed beyond greetings and salutations. "I am shocked to hear that the trusted governess of my children is a truant daughter. Believe me, Captain Holm, had I suspected the facts before I should have warned you. This is a degenerate generation, sir. We parents experience many a pang that our worthy and stricter ancestors never knew."

"Very true, madam," said Captain Holm, respectfully, and with an affectation of grief. "May your children never cause you the grief my daughter has occasioned me. Shakespeare was right, madam, when he said that it was sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child!"

And he sighed profoundly.

Mrs. Hamlyn commiserated the unhappy father, and expressed her sympathy for him in strong terms.

In the midst of the interview one of the magnates of the neighbourhood called, and the widow excused herself and departed to the drawing-room, leaving the visitors together.

Then something of Holm's jubilation showed itself in his gleaming eyes and exultant smile.

"You see how fortune befriends me, Todthely?" he cried. "A few moments more and the girl will be in my hands again. I shall take her to that house in Albemarle Street where I had the flower-girl. I've engaged the rooms again. My money is running low, and I shall be obliged to draw on you."

Todthely drew himself up rather coldly.

"You can have all you want, Holm," he said, coldly, "when the girl agrees to marry me. I have been searching for her for weeks. All the expenses of police, detectives, and hotel bills have come out of my pocket, and I am not disposed to lose more money in this business without a prospect of some return. Suppose you were to change your mind about the marriage, or suppose she were to give us the slip again?"

"She won't do that!" hissed Holm, between his shut teeth.

"I wouldn't risk money on it."

"You decline a farther loan then?"

"Not decline, but postpone it."

Holm's face darkened ominously.

"Do you know what you force me to do?" he asked.

"I am completely run ashore. I haven't five pounds in the world. Expensive habits play the deuce with a man's purse. I shall have to grant the marchioness the interview she desires with the girl—on the condition that she makes no attempt to claim her. I shall receive a thousand pounds from Lady Thornhurst."

"Do it, then," said the squire. "The fact is, Holm," added Todthely, with the air of a man making "a clean breast" of thoughts hitherto held in reserve; "I should like to see the Marchioness of Thornhurst acknowledge the girl as her own. You're a deep fellow, you know, Holm, meaning no offence, and it would be a clever thing in you to work off a pretty young girl on me and receive my binding agreement to pay you two thousand pounds per annum for life! I own I would like to see Lady Thornhurst and the girl together."

"Very well," said Holm, flushing hotly. "You shall see what you desire then. I'll house the girl in Al-

bemarle Street, and send a note to Lady Thornhurst to call this evening at ten o'clock—that's after her dinner-hour, and her present husband will be out."

It was so arranged. Mrs. Hamlyn returned to the library after the departure of her guest, and a little later the garden bell rang, and Tessa and her charges came up the gravelled paths to the villa.

Holm drew back from the window with an evilly triumphant smile.

When Tessa and her pupils entered the house Mrs. Hamlyn rang, and requested the governess to come to her in the library.

Tessa obeyed, without a presentiment of impending evil. Her out-of-door wrappings were still on, and in her cheap furs and shaggy jacket and dark cloth dress she looked what she was, a noble, innocent, high-bred young lady.

There was a flush on her clear cheeks brought there by the keenness of the outdoor air. A night of absolute rest had restored the elasticity to her figure and the proud, half-haughty carriage to her golden head. She came in with a quiet grace, not seeing the visitors, who had stepped from the range of her first glances.

"Come nearer, Miss Holm," said Mrs. Hamlyn, in a tone of severity. "I received a letter from the Misses Lacy yesterday which contained some curious revelations concerning you. I find that the instructress of my children is a truant and disobedient daughter. My duty as a parent has compelled me to send for your father."

"Madam—"

Mrs. Hamlyn waved her hand as Tessa's young voice rang out sharply in a passionate reproach. Captain Holm came forward. We will not dwell upon the scene that followed. We will only say that in spite of Tessa's wild appeal, in spite of the championship of Miss Charlotte, who appeared upon the scene, the young fugitive was given up to her enemies. Captain Holm and Squire Todthely took her away a little later, unheeding in their exultation her dumb despair, and conveyed her to London. Long before the February dusk had fallen Tessa Holm was a helpless prisoner in that house in Albemarle Street in which the Whitechapel flower-girl had tried to personate her. A prisoner, and helpless! Her enemies were triumphant!

CHAPTER L.

AFTER dinner, upon the evening of the day of Tessa's recapture by her father, the Marquis and Marchioness of Thornhurst separated, in the coldness and silence which now characterized their intercourse with each other. Lady Thornhurst went to her boudoir, where, if no visitor came, she purposed spending the evening in a dreary solitude. Lord Thornhurst entered the wide hall, and began to attire himself in overshoes, top-coat, hat and muffler, and to search the rack for an umbrella.

While he was thus engaged a loud ring was heard at the servants' bell. Soon afterwards Martha Bates came up the area stairs, with an unopened letter in her hand, and passed into the boudoir, not seeing her master at the farther end of the hall.

But the marquis saw her, as well as the letter she carried. With his burning jealousy he leaped to a truthful conclusion at once. The letter was from Captain Holm, and was sent under cover to Lady Thornhurst's maid. How many letters had the marchioness received in that clandestine manner? He grew deathly white, and his eyes blazed with the wrath that consumed him.

His first impulse was to go to his wife and demand to see Holm's letter. Then he thought that it was probably an appointment with her to call that evening in his own absence. It was now after nine o'clock, and Captain Holm would probably call within an hour. The marquis almost decided to remain at home to receive him. Then, as the quietest way of managing the matter, he concluded to go out as if for the evening, and to wait in the square for Holm's appearance.

He went out, therefore, banging the outer door with a force that made the windows rattle, and paced up and down the square, keeping in the shadows, and watching his own house with unceasing vigilance.

The letter, as we have intimated, was for Lady Thornhurst, under cover to her maid. It was from Holm, and told her that if she desired to see her daughter upon the pecuniary terms before arranged, and upon a solemn agreement not to make use of her legal authority and remove the girl from his care, she could call in Albemarle Street, at the same number as before, at ten o'clock that evening. Holm bade her beware of treachery, and said that he should admit no one but her maid with her. He also ordered her to bring the thousand pounds, or cheques for it, with her.

From the moment in which she had seen her daughter, two nights before, looking in upon her from the darkness and rain of the gloomy street with gray, wistful eyes, and pale, lovely face, framed in masses of golden hair, Lady Thornhurst had been yearning to see her. Her detectives had been employed

in a constant search for her. Sir Victor Cheswick, having that day made a fresh visit to the Lacy Institute, and there learned of Tessa's residence in Sydenham, had gone on to The Dingle, and had not yet returned. The marchioness had nearly given up all hope of finding her child, when Holm's note was brought to her.

In her anguished frame of mind, shaken to the depths of her soul with maternal love and tenderness, yearning to clasp again to her arms the noble girl who was willing to sacrifice herself for her mother, it would not have seemed possible to Lady Thornhurst to refrain from obeying Holm's invitation. Whatever the danger to herself from any source, she would have braved it to meet her child.

"Captain Holm has found my daughter, Martha," she said, her countenance transfigured with joy. "I am going to see her at ten o'clock, and you will go with me. Go out and bring a cab. Stay; you may dress me first."

The marchioness went up to her room, and changed her costly dinner dress for a street costume of heavy black silk.

A little before ten o'clock Martha was sent out to call a cab.

The maid did not notice the dark figure over the way, pacing ceaselessly in the shadow, with fiery eyes fixed upon the Thornhurst residence. If she had noticed it she might not have suspected it to belong to her master.

"That's Bates," muttered the marquis, looking after the woman as she hurried out of the square. "Is she going to tell Holm that the coast is clear?"

Martha was away some minutes. She came back in a cab, alighted at Thornhurst House, and went in, closing the door. The cab waited.

"I see," said the marquis, with a sardonic smile and an awful look in his eyes. "Ignatia goes to him."

He crossed the street and approached the cabman, who had alighted and was opening the cab door.

"Are you engaged?" asked Lord Thornhurst.

The man replied in the affirmative.

"Which way are you going?" asked the marquis.

"I don't know as that's anybody's business," said the cabman, suspiciously.

"Because I want to go to Oxford Street," said Lord Thornhurst, coolly. "But you can take me there afterwards. I'll just ride on the box with you, so as not to disturb your passengers. Here's a half-sovereign."

He handed the cabman a coin of that amount. The man bit and rang it on the pavement. Then his countenance relaxed into a satisfied grin as he said:

"All right, sir. All right. Excuse my sharpness; we cabbies do get put upon to an awful extent. But I ought to know a gentleman when I see him. Lor', sir, gentlemen always pay liberal, and that's the way I tell 'em from your stuck-up nobodies."

The marquis went upon the outer side of the horse and stood in the shadow, so that he could not be seen from the house. The door of the mansion opened, and Lady Thornhurst came down the steps, followed by her maid.

The marchioness gave the address to the cabman in a low voice, and mistress and servant entered the vehicle, and the door was closed upon them.

The marquis climbed up one side of the cab as the cabman mounted the other, and the vehicle went rolling through Halkin Street and Grosvenor Place to Piccadilly.

Who can describe the feelings of the jealous husband on that strange journey?

After a brisk drive the cabman drew up before the door of the house in Albemarle Street.

Lady Thornhurst alighted, followed by Bates, and, bidding the cabman wait, mounted the house steps. The door was opened to them, contrary to Lady Thornhurst's expectations.

Captain Holm, however, stood a few steps beyond in the open doorway of the reception-room. He was smiling and complacent, and asked the marchioness into the room. She went in with her maid, and the door was closed.

The housemaid, who had stood with the street door ajar, surveying Lady Thornhurst with eyes and mouth open, was now about to shut it, when the marquis leapt from the box of the cab, ran up the steps, and entered the hall.

The girl would have screamed in her affright, Lord Thornhurst's countenance was so terrible, but he made her a gesture to be silent, and held up to her view five glittering sovereigns.

"I am the husband of the lady who has just come," he said. "I will give you these to allow me to remain in the house while she stays here. I will promise you that you shall come to no harm through me."

The amount offered by the marquis would have outweighed looks more terrible than his. The girl took the money, and shut the door.

"The lady have come to see miss," she said.

"Come upstairs, sir."

The marquis, utterly bewildered, softly followed the girl upstairs, without taking time to deliberate.

They had scarcely gained the upper landing when the maid drew his lordship into the shadow of the third staircase, and just then Captain Holm, Squire Todhethy, Lady Thornhurst and her maid came up to the drawing-room floor.

Holm unlocked the front room, and they all went in.

Lord Thornhurst regarded the party in a sort of stupefaction. This did not look like a lovers' meeting.

The room into which Captain Holm had ushered Lady Thornhurst—the room in which she had met the girl that Holm would have foisted upon her as her own—was lighted and warmed.

Tessa was in the inner room, and the door was locked upon her. Captain Holm unlocked the door, but as he would have opened it the marchioness interposed, and said:

"Let me go to her. I must see her, first of all, alone."

Captain Holm stood aside, and the marchioness opened the door and went in.

She found herself in a bedroom, where a soft light was burning. A slight young girl sat in an easy-chair, her face bowed on her hands, her golden hair rippling in a shower about her shoulders.

Lady Thornhurst stopped short, faint and trembling. A panting sound escaped her lips. Tessa heard it, and her wild cry rang through the house. She leaped to her feet and ran to the marchioness, crying out:

"Mother! mother! Oh, mother!"

Lady Thornhurst took the girl to her heart, and they sobbed wildly together. It was many minutes before either could speak or move, then her ladyship drew Tessa to a couch and sat down there with her, holding her close. She gently took up one of the girl's arms, and pushed back the cuff. There was the faint, irregular scar she remembered so well. Then she looked into the limpid, gray eyes, so tender and childlike still, and, though Tessa's face had changed in the years of their separation, the mother knew her child beyond the shadow of a doubt or misgiving.

"Found at last!" she murmured. "Oh, the joy, the rapture of this moment!"

The girl softly caressed her mother's cheek.

"How did you find me out, mamma?" she asked.

"I saw you the other night from my window, darling," said Lady Thornhurst, "and I knew you at once. I have searched for you unremittingly since. Captain Holm has permitted me to see you for one hour; but I cannot leave you, my darling, my only girl! It will kill me to go away and leave you here with him. Come with me into the other room. Perhaps I can make some bargain with Captain Holm, so that he will allow me to keep you always."

She put her arm around Tessa's waist and drew her into the outer room, where Holm, Todhethy, and Martha Bates were seated. As she did so the door of the drawing-room softly opened, and Lord Thornhurst stood on the threshold, pale and terrible. No one but Martha Bates saw him, and she sat paralyzed with terror.

"Are you satisfied, Lady Thornhurst?" demanded Holm, in a mocking voice. "You believe that girl to be your daughter?"

"I know that she is my daughter!" cried the marchioness.

"You hear, Todhethy? You are satisfied?" exclaimed Holm. "You see, my lady, the squire here began to fear that you would not acknowledge the girl as your daughter. He wants to marry her, and I have promised that he shall have her!"

"I am satisfied," said Todhethy, in deep tones.

"Very well. She can be married to you to-morrow," said Holm.

Tessa clung to her beautiful mother.

"I shall not permit this sacrifice, Captain Holm!" cried Lady Thornhurst, passionately.

"How will you help it, madam? You have agreed that you will make no attempt to take her from me!" sneered Captain Holm.

"Ah, Heaven! Yes," moaned Lady Thornhurst. "But can I not buy her freedom? I will give you every penny of my private fortune—my father will pay you—"

"Not all the Redruth estates would buy me off from my revenge!" cried the villain, with a demonic smile. "Weep, Lady Thornhurst. Get down on your knees to me, and see how much that will avail you. You have scorned me, and you shall feel all the horrors of the revenge I have vowed to take upon you. Ah, that revenge! how it prospers! Have I not desolated your home? Have I not alienated from you your proud, exacting Othello of a husband? Have I not separated you from your sons? Did I not play well my part that evening at Thornhurst House, when your husband spurned you in my very presence? Ha, ha! I heard him coming along the hall. With the quickness of thought I fell on my knees at your feet and put my arm round you. Be-

fore you could extricate yourself the marquis stood in the open doorway. Ha, ha!" and again Holm laughed like a demon. "You were indignant, and explained. I echoed your explanations in a manner that made them seem false. Did you not feel in that hour what it was to make Digby Holm your enemy? Woman, you did not suffer a tithe of what is before you! I will wring your heart through your child!"

"Mercy! mercy!" wailed the marchioness.

"Mercy!" cried Holm, foaming with rage. "What mercy have you shown me? You have hated me, scorned me, derided me. You love that husband of yours, and to keep him and Tessa you would do anything. But my heart is harder to you than a millstone. I hate you, Marchioness of Thornhurst. You blush at your husband's approach like a girl in love; you dress for his coming—as you did that night of his return from Brighton—in your costliest attire and diamonds; you revel in a beautiful home and boundless wealth, and you have not one sigh for the husband of your youth—"

"Why should I have?" demanded the marchioness. "I married you in a moment of girlish folly, terribly repented. You were cruel to me. You were base, mercenary, bad to the core. It is hard to say the words before your daughter, Digby Holm, but I never loved you. I have loved but once—"

"And your lover has changed into an enemy!" cried Holm. "The marquis hates you, my lady. But he will turn you out of his house before I have done with you. I will work upon his mad jealousy in a thousand ways. I will marry your daughter to Todhethy, or I will shut her up where she will never see daylight again! You have felt but the beginning of my revenge. You shall now know it in all its horrors."

He moved towards her with arms outstretched, as if he meant to embrace her.

With a bound like a tiger, the marquis leaped into the room. Those who were there shrieked at the sight of him. He looked like an incarnate Nemesis.

He rushed upon Captain Holm, who turned and faced him in a sort of terror. The marquis struck his rival with his clenched fist, and Holm dropped to the floor like a shot.

Lord Thornhurst turned to his terrified wife.

"Come!" he said, simply. "Bring the girl!"

Like one walking in a dream, Lady Thornhurst, Tessa and Martha Bates descended the stairs and entered the waiting cab. The marquis ascended to the box, and the party, with the addition that had been made to it in the form of Tessa, returned to Belgrave Square.

They entered the mansion, and Lady Thornhurst, almost paralyzed with apprehension, went into her boudoir, Tessa following her. Poor Martha Bates went upstairs weeping. She thought that the hour of her lady's doom had come.

So thought the beautiful marchioness. She took off her hat and sacque and stood before his lordship, fully expecting to hear her sentence of expulsion.

But Lord Thornhurst, in an utter silence, drew her to the depths of the bay-window, and the red satin folds of the curtains hid them from the gaze of the affrighted Tessa.

It was no sentence of expulsion which Lord Thornhurst had led his wife into that dim little nook to hear. He stood before her, his broad chest heaving, his lips quivering, his face convulsed with an awful emotion.

"My wife!" he said, brokenly, in tones whose tenderness startled the tortured, anguished marchioness. "My poor, wronged wife! Can I ever atone? I have been blind, but now my eyes are opened. Shall it all be as if it had not been? Can you forgive me?"

Ignatia looked at him wildly, incredulously. Had happiness come to her at last? She met a loving, worshipping gaze full of agony and self-reproach.

He opened his arms to her. She flew into his embrace, as a dove flies to its nest.

"You have forgiven me, Antony?" she sobbed, in an ecstasy of joy.

"Nay, it is I who must sue for forgiveness," he answered, gently. "Yet we have both erred, my wife. You should have told me the truth years ago. A secret between husband and wife is but a coiled serpent, which will sting sooner or later. I have been cruel, overbearing, and unbelieving. My sin has been the greater. But we begin anew, my own wife, and our wedded happiness will now be built upon a rock—the rock of mutual confidence and love. You have not ceased to love me?"

Her blushes answered for her.

"And you?" she whispered.

"My wife," he answered, tenderly, with a solemn gentleness, "you are all my world, the better half of myself, the life of my life, the soul of my soul. We have waded through the waters of affliction together, and from this moment there will be between us the implicit trust of a perfect love."

They stood there a little longer in sacred communion, then Lord Thornhurst drew his wife into the boudoir. Tessa was sitting upon a sofa, crying softly.

"Tessa!" called his lordship.

The girl sprang to her feet in a sudden terror; but the grand Saxon face of the marquis, with the big blue eyes full of kindness and benignancy, in no way resembled the terrible countenance that had appalled her at the house in Albemarle Street.

"Tessa," said the marquis again, with a smile of tender sweetness, "come to me. You have no father, my child. Henceforth I will be your father, and you shall be as dear to me as the sons my wife has borne me."

He held his wife to his breast with one arm; he stretched out the other arm to Tessa, and she sprang forward and was clasped with her mother to the broad breast of that noble gentleman who would henceforth be to her a true and loving father.

She had found a home at last!

The next morning Sir Victor Cheswick, weary and disheartened, arrived at Thornhurst House. He was ushered into the presence of Lady Thornhurst and Tessa, and his sorrow, as may well be imagined, was turned into joy.

Captain Holm speedily recovered from the blow Lord Thornhurst had dealt him, but he made no effort to recover Tessa. What was defeated, and he accepted that defeat with what philosophy he could command. His revenge had failed miserably, and those whom he had sought to injure were now far beyond his reach. Todhethy left him to his fate and went back to Dorsetshire, where he became miserably and misanthropically.

No longer buoyed up by that wild hope of revenge upon the Marchioness of Thornhurst, Digby Holm sank lower and lower, rushing into the vortex of destruction with headlong speed. He became an employee in a gambling-house, an employment for which his experiences of late years had fitted him; but he soon became too low even for that, and one wild December night, just a year after his return to England and his memorable visit to the wayside inn of Mrs. Kiggs, in Devonshire, he was found dead in the streets. It was supposed that he had perished in a fit of drunkenness.

During the year that had proved so full of misery to him all had gone well with those whom he hated.

Lady Thornhurst had procured and identified the garments and sleeve-clasps which were upon Tessa when Holm consigned the child to the care of Mrs. Kiggs, as they had been purchased by Reuben Dennis from the old woman and brought with Tessa to London.

The girl's identity was proved beyond a doubt, and she was declared the heiress-apparent to the Redruth estates, which she would inherit after her mother.

The rejoining of Colonel Redruth over the recovery of his grand-daughter, and the clearing of the clouds that had threatened to darken for ever the life of Ignatia, was beyond description. His joy gave a new impulse to his health, and he recovered from his illness and grew hale and hearty, promising to last into a vigorous and extreme old age.

Lady Thornhurst, about a month after recovering her daughter, purchased a beautiful freehold farm in Devonshire, with an old stone farmhouse upon it, and presented the deeds of this estate to Reuben Dennis, in Tessa's name, and "to his heirs and assigns for ever."

The overjoyed clerk resigned his office—much to the chagrin and annoyance of the senior partner of Marsh and Co., who had fancied that, by his early and interested charity, he had bought Dennis for life—and moved down into Devonshire upon his farm, which Lady Thornhurst, also in Tessa's name, completely stocked and furnished.

The cider from Dennis's farm, and the butter and clotted cream from Mrs. Dennis's dairy, command the highest price in the London markets, and are noted far and near. The once sallow clerk has grown portly and ruddy, and is the beau-ideal of a yeoman. The once spare and hollow-cheeked seamstress is a buxom matron, with bustling ways, and the neatest dairy, the finest poultry-yard, and the plumpest children to be found in all the county of Devon.

Lady Thornhurst kept her daughter with her nearly two years before she could suffer her to go from her house and home. But though at last she gave Tessa to Sir Victor Cheswick, her daughter did not go from her heart, or from that of Lord Thornhurst. There was a grand wedding in Yorkshire when Tessa and Sir Victor were married, and the Yorkshire gossips are wont to remark that "young Lady Cheswick is as much at Thornhurst as at her own beautiful home at Cheswick Castle. Strange that a mother and daughter should be so wrapped up in each other as are Lady Thornhurst and Lady Cheswick."

Shall we say one last word of the beautiful marchioness? It shall then be this: Long before she read the brief notice in a morning paper headed,

"Death of a once brilliant army officer by drinking and exposure," Lady Thornhurst had ceased to be stirred by the name or thought of Digby Holm. His power over her failed on that night when her husband knew all the truth; and when Lord Thornhurst took her to his heart in generous love the Old Life's Shadows passed away from her for ever, and she stepped out into a glorious sunshine that can never be dimmed.

THE END.

MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

CHAPTER XI.

HAWKLEY, the less excited of the two, turned and looked at Duke.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"I know more than you think," said Duke, still excited. "You found her married to Sir Vane Charteris. The lady you saw in your vision was Miss Olivia Lyndith; and on that very night—the 25th of last month—I saw and heard in reality what you saw and heard in that singular vision."

Robert Hawkley was fully aroused now. He had told his story, dreamily, as much to himself as to Duke. His tanned face flushed deep red as he rose.

"What are you saying?" he said, hoarsely. "You would not dare to trifle with me—"

"Sit down—sit down!" Duke interrupted. "I'll tell you the whole affair. It's the strangest, the most wonderful thing that ever was heard of. Good gracious! What would Rosanna say?"

Then Duke Mason, with breathless volubility, quite unlike himself, poured into the listener's ear the story of the night of the twenty-fifth of March—every word he had heard, all he had seen up to the moment of Geoffrey Lyndith's appearance at the waiting-room of Speckhaven Station.

"Now!" he concluded, out of breath, and glowing with triumph, "what do you think of that? Are you satisfied now that she always loved you—always was true to you?"

The darkness hid the marble pallor that had fallen once more on Hawkley's face. Only the tremor in his voice betokened what he felt when he answered:

"I don't think I ever really doubted it—no, not when I saw her at the altar with that man, or when I listened to her uncle's falsehoods. May Heaven's light fall upon him! My darling! my darling!"

His voice broke; he put one hand up over his face, even in the darkness. For a moment dead silence fell.

Hawkley broke the silence and looked up.

"I beg your pardon," he said, quietly, in his usual tone; "will you tell me what argument her uncle used to induce her to yield, and go with him? You say she defied him at first, and was resolutely bent on going with you?"

"She was," Duke said. "It puzzled me for the time, but I think I have hit on a solution of the mystery now. I did not hear what he said to her after the first moment, but there is a sequel to my story of that eventful night which, to my mind, lights up everything."

Then Duke recounted that little episode of June one year and nine months before, when Dr. Worth had been called out in the rain to assist at the birth of a baby-girl at Lyndith Grange. Once more Robert Lisle started erect and eager to listen.

He remembered the words Geoffrey Lyndith had let fall of a child that had died on the day of its birth.

"My opinion is," Duke said, "that old uncle abducted the child, and kept it from her all along; and on that night, in the waiting-room, promised to give it up to her if she would consent. She thought you were dead; she would sacrifice anything, like most mothers, for her baby, and she consented for its sake. And," continued Duke, in a perfect burst of triumph, "that child is in the next room!"

"In the next room!" Mr. Lisle could but just repeat—"in the next room!"

Once again Duke began—there seemed no end to the story-telling—and related the receipt of Olivia's note, and how singularly on her wedding morning she had given the child to his care.

"There can be no doubt whatever about it," Duke said; "it is the same child of Dr. Worth's tale, and your wife was the mysterious lady. She told me plainly the child was hers, and, to make assurance doubly sure, it has a locket with your picture and hair round its neck. My sister recognized the likeness this morning, and spoke to me about it. You saw the child half a dozen times to-day—yours beyond the shadow of a doubt. Its paternity is written in its eyes."

There was still another pause.

Duke got up and lit the lamp; he avoided these blanks in the conversation.

"I'll fetch Polly in, if you like—she calls herself Polly—that is, if she's not asleep."

But Polly was asleep, and not for a regiment of fathers should she be disturbed, said Rosanna, who was reading Blair's Sermons, by a solitary dip in the kitchen, and looked about as placable and yielding as a granite Medusa.

"As Mr. Hawkley has waited so long, I dare say he can wait until morning," she continued, as she went back to Blair's Sermons.

"Your sister is right," Mr. Hawkley said. He was white as marble, and looked almost cold. "I will see the child to-morrow, to say good-bye."

"Good-bye! Then you mean to leave England—to give up all claim to—"

"Lady Charteris," he spoke the name quite calmly, quite coldly, "is out of England by this time—on the first stage of her bridal tour to Italy. For her sake I once gave up name, character, and my native land; for her sake I make a greater sacrifice now. I give up herself."

"Think, for a moment, of all that is involved in my coming forward and claiming her. I break her heart, I blight her life, and in the moment we meet we are torn apart. I to stand my trial as a thief. I am innocent; but I cannot prove it. It is the old struggle of right against right."

"As it is she may learn to forget; happiness and peace may come to her. I cannot make her the talk of England. I won't drag the story of her girlhood into the world. She will come to think of me, and I—"

He clenched his hands, and great drops steamed on his pallid face. "May Heaven keep me from succumbing to cowardly end!"

His folded arms lay on the table, his head fell forward upon them. So Duke Mason, with bated breath and a great compassion in his heart, left him.

The morning came, gray and overcast. A London fog had set in, and a sky like brown paper frowned down on the smoky city.

But little Polly, in her blue silk dress, brown boots, and her golden locket, and flower ringlets, looked sunshiny enough to light up the whole parish of Bloomsbury herself.

The strange gentleman with the blue eyes so like her own, and away beard, took her in his arms, and looked into her small face, and Polly, who floated Duke and Rosanna as thoughtlessly as though she had been Czarina of all the Russias, "took to him" in a way that was quite amazing. She kissed his bearded lips, let him look at her locket, told him her name was Polly, and that "Daddy" was all gone away.

"I suppose her name is Mary," Duke suggested, "and she calls herself Polly for short."

"Her name is Paulina," Mr. Hawkley said, quietly. "I am quite certain of it. Pauline was the name of—of her maternal grandmother, and of her mother's twin sister—an old family name among the Lyndiths. This child's name is Paulina Lisle. I took my mother's name when on the Continent, and shall keep it. Let her grow up as Mason; keep her with you always, unless her mother should claim her. Her right is always first and most sacred."

He kissed the child yearningly, wistfully, and put her down. Half an hour later he had left Half Moon Terrace for ever.

"The 'Land of Columbia' leaves again to-morrow," he said to Duke. "I shall return by her."

They shook hands and parted, with no more words, and the scene-painter went to his painting. He was not sentimental or imaginative in any way, but all that day, and for many days, the pale face and dark eyes of Robert Hawkley haunted him like a ghost.

The "Land of Columbia" sailed on Tuesday morning. On Tuesday night there came a letter to Half Moon Terrace addressed to Duke.

A bank-note for five hundred pounds fell out when he opened it, and he read these lines:

"You spoke of wishing to have enough to purchase for yourself a home in Speckhaven, where you said there was a better opening for you than in London. It is my desire that you should do so at once, for my child's sake. Once a year I will write to you and you to me, telling me of her progress and welfare. I go to make a fortune for her; please Heaven my daughter shall be an heiress, before whom those who scorn her now shall yet bow down. Let her grow up as your own—in utter ignorance of her own story. If I live I may one day return to England, and to her. If I die, be her father in my stead."

ROBERT HAWKLEY.

So the first chapter in little Polly's strange history was ended, and, strange though it was, it was destined to be only the prelude to a still stranger history to come.

"It will be the most splendid thing ever seen in

Speckhaven, Rosanna! Figure to yourself yards and yards of Chinese lanterns sparkling through the trees, plashing fountains, and the divine music of Holmestale military brass band! Fancy the long tables groaning—that's the word—groaning under the roast beef of old England, and foaming flagons of ale! Fancy flags flying, and bells ringing, and everybody eating, and drinking, and making merry, and your little Polly sharing the glories of the hour with the Honourable Guy Paget Earlescourt, second and favourite son of Lord Montalien, of Montalien Priory, Lincolnshire!"

"Polly!"

"Well, I mean as the prettiest girl at the feast. I'm quite determined to go, Rosanna, so iron my white muslin dress, like a dear old love, and say no more about it."

The spirited speaker of this oration stood in the middle of the floor—a tall slip of a girl, with a slim waist, sun-burnt hands, and a clear, ringing, sweet young voice. The prettiest sight on earth—a fair, joyous, healthy girl of sixteen.

It was high-noon of a delicious June day, and she stood in a burst of sunshine that flooded the little parlour, that flashed in her short auburn curls, and sparkled back from her joyous eyes. Fourteen years ago you saw her a lovely baby, and now she is a "miss" of sixteen. And has the fair baby beauty fully kept its promise in the girl? Well, at a first glance you might be inclined to say no. "Crop the flowing locks of the Venus Anadyomene, give her a sunburnt complexion, and a smudge of dirt on her nose, put her in a torn dress, and what becomes of your goddess but a good-looking young woman with a pair of fine eyes?"

Polly labours under all those disadvantages at present, after her nice dainty walk through the blazing-noon-day sun; but in spite of the smudge on her nose it is a very pretty nose, perfect in shape and chiselling. The mouth may be a trifle larger than a rosebud, perhaps, but it is a handsome mouth, with that earnestness at the corners which makes a mouth at once resolute and sweet. She may be tanned; you may see a few freckles under her eyes, but oh, those eyes! so blue, so radiant, flashing with life, and health, and fun, and mischief from morning till night! You saw neither freckles nor tan, once their lustre flashed upon you. The auburn hair short-cropped, and all curling round her head, and standing there in the June sunlight, she looks like a sunny boy, an undeniably sunny boy, ready for anything in the way of fun or frolic, from smoking a cigar to riding an unbroken colt round the paddock, without saddle or bridle.

Rosanna sits before her—Rosanna, whom old Time no more dare approach than any other man. Fourteen years have left her absolutely and entirely unchanged—grim of aspect, kindly of heart, sharp of tongue, and a model of all the Christian and domestic virtues, with only one weakness, and that—Polly. Polly, who has been her torment, her plague, her idol, any time those fourteen years; whom she worries about all day, and whose innumerable sins and ill-doings keep her awake all night; whom she scolds, and loves, and spoils, and to whose will she bows in as abject submission as her weak-minded brother himself.

Polly's earliest recollection is of this pleasant eight-roomed house in the suburbs of Speckhaven, with its little flower garden in front, its kitchen garden and paddock in the rear, its spotless whiteness of wall, and brilliant green of shutters. Of London, and "Daddy," and her baby life, all memory is gone. She believes the story of herself current in the town—a very simple story—that she is the orphan child of dear old Duke's cousin dead and gone, and left as the sole legacy of the dying man.

"A precious legacy I have been!" Polly was wont to observe in parenthesis. "Duke doesn't mind my enormities—indeed, if I murdered somebody I don't think it would surprise or trouble him at all. But that poor Rosanna! I've been bringing her gray hairs with sorrow to Speckhaven Cemetery every hour since she got me first."

So Polly had shot up, tall, slim, pretty, healthy, and self-willed. She had persisted in catching every disorder incidental to childhood. She had made Rosanna sit up with her for weeks and weeks together, and she had torn more new dresses, and tumbled off more dizzy heights, than any other child on record. She liked her own way, and insisted on having it with an energy worthy a better cause, and here she stood at sixteen, the prettiest and wildest madcap in Lincolnshire—a handsome, blue-eyed brunette.

(To be continued.)

MARRIAGE.—The more married men you have the fewer crimes there will be. Marriage renders a man more virtuous and wiser. The father of a family is not willing to blush before his children.



[REBEQUE'S CHARGE.]

BERTHE.

I HAD just come into my inheritance when my friend Max Deblois was married. I was a little disappointed. I had hoped that Max would come to Redwood and live with me; but no, he was going abroad with his bride.

Well, I said nothing of what I had hoped. He had decided to marry a woman whom I did not like, and he was to leave me for an indefinite time, but he was happy, and I would not cloud his enjoyment. I went to the wedding, and wished them prosperity, shook hands with Max, came away, and saw him never again.

I received one letter from him while he travelled. It was dated at Rome. Then came news that he was dead—had died from the fever prevalent in the vicinity of the Fontaine Marthe. No blow of my life ever struck me more hardly.

I was settled at Redwood. The grand old house, with its ornate woodwork, stained glass, and tessellated floors—its long colonnades, terraces, and lawns, was my home.

It had been an unexpected inheritance. I had not anticipated becoming my uncle's heir. But he had chosen to make me so, and indisputably, and, having no family, I reigned over my kingdom in solitary state. I had an amanuensis, who was something of a companion; the rest of the household consisted of a housekeeper and servants.

Max's death was a great shock to me. We had lived together at college, and I had believed that we should always spend more or less of our lives together. When he married I had the secret belief that he would find, in brief time, his mistake, and that my love would be more than ever to him. But he had left me, as well as his wife; he had gone into the great Beyond; and I believe now that my grief was far greater than hers.

About three years later I received a letter post-

marked Paris. I had no correspondents abroad, and wondered whom it could be from. It ran as follows, written in a most unprepossessing penmanship:

"MR. PAUL ST. ALME—My husband's friend, I feel that I have no claim to address you on my own account, but you were fond of Max. He has left a child. It was born three months after his death. I was quite alone at the time, having, as you know, perhaps, no family here or elsewhere. I have been very unhappy, but have now decided to marry. The child, however, is an objection, and I wish to know if you will, for Max's sake, take charge of it. You can bring it up much better than it is possible for me to do. I remember that Max had great respect for your judgment, and I am sure if it were possible for him to be aware of my proposal that he would willingly assent. I hope you are not married. I shall wait anxiously to hear from you. I send you my address below. Please write at once.—JULIA DEBLOIS."

I was quite astonished by the import of this epistle, and for a time had no idea what reply to make. The existence of a child was an utter surprise to me. I was conscious of being most disagreeably affected. If Julia Deblois had asked me to assist her in taking care of her child I should have felt for her a quick and warm sympathy. I should have responded in haste. As it was, the idea of her seeking to rid herself of the responsibility of her motherhood for the purpose of gaining for herself another husband was most shocking to me.

"I knew that she was never worthy of Max," I said to myself, walking the floor of my library. At length I seated myself at the writing-table and wrote as follows:

"MRS. DEBLOIS.—Your letter astonishes me in more than one respect. If you had written me that you wished to devote your life to your child, I should have bidden you to Redwood as if you were my sister. As it is, I willingly embrace the duty you wish to avoid, on one condition. Send the child to me,

but offer no farther communication to it or me. Congratulating you on escaping so soon from your widowhood, yours, with due respect,

"PAUL ST. ALME."

When I had written the letter and seen it safely posted I began to be sorry.

"She will think me bad tempered, and, as she is probably not without feeling for the child, she will not trust it to me. I have made a mistake through my prejudice."

I was sorry, for my heart had leapt quickly at the thought of Max's son. A noble little fellow he must be. I was slow at making friendships, but, once made, I held on till the death. I felt now that I loved this unseen child for his father's sake. I longed to have him at Redwood and in my arms. It stung me to think of my friend's son a beggar for the right of human affection.

But the next day came the child.

I had been to London and returned late in the evening. Dapper little Engley, my amanuensis, met me in the hall.

"Mr. St. Alme, a most extraordinary occurrence has happened! A woman with an infant has come, and insists upon staying here."

"Where is she?" I asked, a little bewildered.

"In the drawing-room, sir, waiting to see you."

I ran up the stairs, and pushed open the drawing-room door.

Before the fire sat a woman with a child across her knees. She seemed to recognize me as the master of Redwood as soon as she saw me, and, rising, she laid the child upon a lounge, and made me a profound salutation.

"You have been waiting to see me. May I ask who you are?" I said.

She seemed to have some difficulty in understanding, or my words were unexpected, for she looked at me for a moment in silence.

"My name is Rebeque. I have come from Madame Deblois, in Paris, with ma'n'selle," she said, in French.

Comprehending, and slightly excited, I turned towards the lounge. Rebeque anticipated me by turning down the plaid in which the child was wrapped. Dimpled shoulders, robes of white embroidery, dark hair parted in the middle of a dainty forehead—the child was a girl! For a moment I was too enraged and disconcerted to speak.

"Good heavens!" I cried, then, "what did your mistress think I was going to do with a little girl?"

Rebeque begged my pardon in French, and stood looking at me. Comprehending that the woman could not be to blame, I asked her if she was the child's nurse. Yes, she had taken care of it since its birth. I rang for my housekeeper, put the two into her care without making any explanations, though the good woman looked sorely bewildered, then sought my own chamber far too much disturbed to sleep.

At length I decided that the child must, of course, stay with me. Children of either sex at two years old were to be treated pretty much alike, and later she could go away to boarding-school. Very much disappointed and dissatisfied I at length fell asleep.

The next morning I went up to the nursery. The little one was awake, playing with toys, as fresh and beautiful as a flower. She ran towards me and fearlessly held up a wooden cat for my admiration. I took the sweet white form in my arms and kissed the little rose-hued cheek.

"What is her name?"

"Berthe, sir."

She was Max's daughter, and I loved her.

Time passed. I never can say why I did not marry. It was simply because I did not fall in love, I suppose. I had a wide circle of acquaintances, saw many interesting people, gave parties and fêtes at Redwood, but the easy tenor of my life was unchanged. I was a literary man; I had my ambitions as an author, and I felt the importance of no conflicting interests.

When Berthe was six years old I engaged a governess for her. About this time I heard of her mother's death.

Four years later I sent her to boarding-school. Redwood was shut up, and I went abroad. In Egypt I almost forgot her existence. For they were strange, marked years which followed, full of events and experiences.

I searched for lore, and found it. I read from the world now, instead of from books, and got by heart lessons that could not be told. I changed. I felt that my brain grew compact with a hard aggregate of thought. My eye no longer looked on the surface of things, but was keen and penetrating. I learned the worth of my own feelings and desires.

It seemed to me that the pleasures of wisdom were beyond all others. I felt myself master of life.

I was in Greece when a letter reached me recalling me home. I had been away six years. I was not

really loth to return; one cannot travel without suffering hardships, and I remembered the comfort and quiet of Redwood pleasantly. I turned my face homeward, after many days, with the desire of finding rest.

But I was in a land of slow travel. It was months before I reached Redwood.

Peace rested there—a beautiful power. The garden had grown into a wilderness of beauty, guided by the careful hand of the gardener whom I had left in charge. The old elms hung over me their dewy bowers, the birds darted down the aisles of green, roses cast abroad their sweetness, and the fountains fell with a sound like faint hushing.

My old housekeeper was ready to welcome me, and, though she had grown wrinkled and gray, her faithful face smiled on me warmly, and we fell instantly back to the old, friendly relationship.

"You'll be having the young lady back now, sir?"

"Yes, Miss Berthe must come home." I had decided on that, but on nothing beyond that. I had not seen Berthe for six years. I was thirty-seven years of age, she was sixteen. I could not guess what might be her wishes, but I hoped she would be pretty and wish to live at Redwood. Yet I feared that a young girl would consider it a dull life. I wished I had a wife and a domestic circle within which to receive her. I began to distrust a little the wisdom of my choice in not marrying.

But I sent for Berthe. My neighbours, the Bromleys, were going to London, and would bring her back.

I was reading in the library. I had not heard carriage wheels, or any premonition of an arrival, when a light step sounded close beside my chair.

"Mr. St. Alme."

I started up, looking at the grave young girl who stood there with steadfast eyes fixed on my face.

"It must be Berthe," I said.

My surprise seemed to surprise her.

"You sent for me," she said.

"Yes, I sent for you, certainly. Are you glad to come home?"

Her magnetic fairy hand thrilled in mine; but I saw her lips quiver faintly instead of smiling. I felt abashed, she was so much a woman.

I relieved her of her heavy travelling shawl and hat, and wheeled a chair for her to the open window.

"I would have come for you myself," I said, "but I thought it would be more pleasant for you to find me at home."

She gave me a silent, questioning glance which I did not understand.

"She does not like me," I thought, with a pang.

But I resolved to try to make her happy. I inquired into her life; I promised her all that I thought would please her. During the evening she played and sang for me, executing both with great taste and sweetness.

She was not as pretty as she had been as a child, but she had beautiful eyes, and she looked like Max. A certain peculiarity of contracting her brows when she smiled—which was very rarely—was his very own. Her eyes were deep, clear, with a meaning I could not read. Though very gentle in manner, her marked composure gave her a great dignity.

She resembled in character no one I knew; she was not in the least like the girl tourists I had seen abroad. I thought her very odd. She was, but I did not imagine that this was my own work. I did not understand what isolation from all human ties will effect in a warm and generous nature. I did not realize it, but she had been neglected, and she had learned to do without love.

She must have felt that I wished to be kind to her. I ordered books and pictures for her entertainment, and I bought a saddle horse that I might ride with her. Riding seemed to brighten in her an enthusiasm. She loved nature and animals. Almost her first act was to fraternize with the old hound Nap, who henceforth constituted himself her bodyguard.

My horse was a young creature of great beauty. Juno I called her. Berthe would not mount her, preferring her own little dapple gray, yet regarding her with great admiration. We rode every morning, directly after breakfast, and I had never enjoyed rides as I delighted in these. Perhaps it was because Berthe, animated with pleasure, lost something of her reserve, and perhaps because the exercise gave her a rich rose colour. I had an artist's eye for beauty.

When we returned one morning we observed a carriage standing before the door. As we entered the hall a servant informed me that a gentleman was waiting to see me.

"Do you know who it is, Tom?"

"No, sir; strange gentleman, sir."

I repaired to the drawing-room. A man in a travelling dress of tweed, with his driving whip in his hand, stood examining a picture. His back was towards me, but I saw that he was of middle age. I

observed too that he was not a gentleman, but he had a certain polish gained by rubbing through the world.

He addressed himself to me with confidence. He had come lately from the Continent. He had been the husband of Mrs. Deblois. He wished to see Berthe.

"I understand that the young lady has been brought up without any communication with her mother, but blood is blood, Mr. St. Alme, and Mrs. Goldhurst left some jewels and also some laces, I think, that she wished given to her daughter. I have brought them in a package here, directed in her own hand."

I did not fancy the man or his errand, but I had no cause to be uncivil. I invited him to dine, had his horses put up, and sent a servant to tell Berthe that there was company to dinner.

Farther conversation informed me that Max had left his wife in good circumstances, as I had gathered at the time of Berthe's coming, as a child, to Redwood. Mr. Goldhurst, I suspected, had married her for her money. She had left no other children.

The gentleman mentioned was tall and muscular, with a sandy imperial and light-blue opaque eyes. He impressed me as being very secretive.

Berthe came down wearing a certain loveliness of appearance that was occasional with her. She turned very pale when I told her who my visitor was.

We went to dinner. Mr. Goldhurst proved, as I suspected, an uneducated man. He had been a merchant, had but largely on the turf, and was agent for a titled sporting man.

He had some wealth and seemed of an adventurous turn. I cannot say that he was not agreeable. He told witty stories, as if he were thus in the habit of paying for his wine. It was his insensibility to my ceremonious politeness, his secure and easy manner in a house where he was barely tolerated, that so sharply annoyed me. Or was it that Berthe showed in him such an interest?

After dinner she spoke with me aside, eagerly.

"I would like to talk with Mr. Goldhurst."

"Certainly. You can see him alone in the drawing-room."

I made a mistake there. I should not have separated myself from what interested her, but the man was very distasteful to me, and I was secretly angry with her for being interested in him.

What had her mother been to her, I thought? I had never before seen that look of deep interest on her face, much as I had striven to produce it. How excited and beautiful she had looked, how intently she had regarded him at dinner!

Every moment that she remained alone in the drawing-room with Goldhurst increased my dissatisfaction. I sat in the library, trying to read, but the page stared me meaninglessly in the face while the thick beats of my heart increased.

The afternoon wore away. At length I heard a step in the hall. It was Berthe's. She came into the library, and turned her treasures out upon the table before me. She had been weeping.

"See," she said, "here is my mother's wedding-ring—the one she married my father with. This necklace was hers, and these ear-jewels. She wore this lace."

She unrolled the lace with a tender touch—not because it was costly, I divined, but that her mother had worn it. Then, with the tears running down her face, she laid before me a photograph of Julia Deblois.

"It is very like her, Mr. Goldhurst says."

"Yes, it is like her," I answered, for it was an excellent counterpart of the pretty, selfish face. "If you value these things I am very glad you have them, Berthe."

I was aware that I spoke coldly; I could not make my voice sound otherwise, for my heart was not in it. I saw that she gave me a glance of reproach as she went away.

Henceforth a shadow clouded my heart. Berthe's manner changed; I fancied it grew cold towards me. The thought pierced my heart like a knife. Then I would think myself wrong; but her preoccupation was unmistakable. She spent much time alone—more with Mr. Goldhurst.

He came often to Redwood. He asked only for Berthe, and it was not unusual for him to depart without seeing me at all.

I did not like this, but I could not see any occasion for interfering. I had no reason for thinking that Mr. Goldhurst was making love to Berthe. If I paused on the threshold to listen to their conversation, as they sat in the drawing-room, the gentleman was usually describing some locality abroad, or telling a story of her mother.

He talked well, that I could not deny, and he interested Berthe more than I had ever seen her interested. I observed that to all descriptions of famous places she would supplement the eager question—"Was mamma with you?" or "Did mamma see it?" I had never talked to Berthe of her mother. How

could I? She had not been a true mother—or such a woman, in any respect, as I wished Berthe to imitate.

But it was a source of great trouble to me. I resolved to take Berthe away from home.

Procuring a chaperone for her in the person of a respected great-aunt of mine, we went to the seaside.

It delighted me to see that Berthe was pleased. Without caring a straw for the gay society, she enjoyed to the full the sea.

To my surprise she was the most daring of bathers, learning to swim exceedingly well, and her litho figure in its scarlet dress was unusually marked and admired.

As we drove one day I said:

"Are you happy here, Berthe?"

"Happy?" she said, slowly. "I never am happy."

I was astonished and unbelieving. I made her repeat the words.

"What is it that you want, Berthe?" I asked, with a heavy heart.

"What I never can have," she answered, with a smile that, in spite of her rose-bloom cheek, was deep and sad.

She brushed a fleck of dust from my coat as if she had been my daughter, then gave me her glass and bade me look at a distant yacht.

The blue water and the white sails of the "Sylvia" danced through my shimmering tears. What did my darling want that I could not give her?

It was the next day that I heard two of the sporting young men of the town talking of a pair of incomparable horses which had that day arrived.

"Never was anything in these parts like 'em," said Bolton.

"They say they were bought for some nobleman," said Colton.

In the afternoon I saw the horses, two milk-white thoroughbreds. They were elegantly harnessed to a handsome phaeton, and, to my surprise, driven by Goldhurst. He recognized me, and lifted his hat.

I returned to our hotel. Berthe and Aunt Margaret were sitting at one of the long French windows of our reception-room.

"Mr. Goldhurst is here, Berthe," I said.

"Is he?" she returned, with a flash of interest.

She had better have thrust a poniard through my heart than to have looked like that. I was faint with pain. She loved him. I looked over at her in silence. What right had I to interfere? She was the mistress of her own heart.

The next morning she excused herself from driving with me, and, while I was absent, Goldhurst came. He had left his card for me. I lit my cigar with it.

He came again in the afternoon, and Berthe went to drive with him. I could not interfere. I had never assumed any authority over her, and what right had I to forbid it?

I knew nothing against Goldhurst's character, whatever I may have instinctively believed; but I determined to investigate his history. I had a right to prevent Berthe's ruining herself.

It added intensity to my pain to mark in her an added animation and higher tone of spirits.

"She is happy now," I said to myself.

I looked at Goldhurst with disdain, at Berthe with anger and passionate regret. How bitter was my heart, how sharp my disappointment, how dark my life!

But I would not give up without a struggle. I wrote to make inquiries regarding Goldhurst, and I went to London on the same errand.

Goldhurst had reported himself as staying at a respectable hotel in town. His name could not be found in the book of entry; he had never been there. At the start I detected a falsity. He seemed to be known chiefly to sporting men and horse jockeys.

I returned to Redwood, thoroughly roused. At the station a letter was handed me; it was from a friend in Liverpool, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR FELLOW,—I happen to be in possession of considerable information regarding the person you inquire of. He found it convenient to leave his lodgings in London last spring, his two wives not agreeing to live on the Mormon plan. His financial operations also did not prove strictly in accordance with the queen's law, but Lord L—, with whom he maintains a sort of footing, finding him probably very useful, procured him some little sporting commission to relieve the exigency of his position. In short, my dear St. Alme, the fellow is a rascal, but a sharp one enough to keep himself at large. Don't have anything to do with him. In haste.

"Sincerely yours,"

"MORTIMER."

I was greatly excited and deeply grateful. I walked rapidly along the roads. Not having been expected, the carriage had not come for me. The sun was setting; the dusky dells were full of shadow; the air was redolent of dew and fragrance. The sleepy

birds chirped in the heavy foliage of the trees. The sweet night seemed to whisper a promise to me as I hastened home.

I thought that I would talk to Berthe, then simply forbid Goldhurst my house. I would tell her what he was; I would rid myself quietly of him. How delicious was my relief as I ran lightly up the steps of Redwood.

Berthe was neither in the drawing-room nor library. It was long past the supper-hour. I encountered a servant, and learned that she had gone to drive with Mr. Goldhurst.

"It is the last time," I said, aloud.

The girl stared at me.

"They've just gone, Mr. St. Alma. You might, if you pleased, sir, send Tom after Miss Berthe to bring her back. She'd be right glad to come back, sir."

Had it come to that—my own servants compassionating me—or did I fancy it?

"Tell Tom to saddle Juno. I will ride after them myself," I said.

I would bring Berthe back. I would make Goldhurst understand that he was forbidden her acquaintance. And so much in earnest was I that I put a pistol in my pocket.

Juno galloped lightly down the avenue. The sun had set, and the moon was coming up. It was a splendid night; but I took little heed of its beauty, my mind was busy with my errand.

The way was very quiet; no living thing was in sight. When I could see far forward on the road I yet descried nothing of the carriage. If they had "just gone," as Jane said, they could not have gone very far. I touched Juno with the spur; I should soon overtake them. The creature flew like air.

I surmounted hill after hill, giving myself, each time, the prospect of half a mile ahead, sometimes much more, but they were not yet in sight. Had I missed the road? No, they had taken this road, Tom said, and there had been no turning.

Swiftly and steadily Juno cantered on. Was there no end to the unbroken silence of the gliding white road? Where were they—those two winding through the lights and shadows of those lovely scenes? I remembered how beautiful Berthe's face was by moonlight.

The thought stung me. I pricked my horse so sharply that she bounded in flight, then tore ahead at a pace to which her former speed was nothing. I loved my horse, but I forgot to be tender of her that night. I loved Berthe more.

As we dashed up a high hill I drew rein for a moment, and, leaping Juno upon a high bank, looked and listened. There was no sound, but far away, on a cross road, I saw a carriage and two white horses.

Already more than five miles from home, they were going farther. I looked at my watch; it was ten o'clock.

My blood boiled. I dashed down the hill in pursuit. Coward, scoundrel!—how dared he place an innocent girl in such a position of impropriety? They were likely at any time to meet our neighbours. And I thought that Berthe ought to know better.

"But they shall stop soon," I vowed as my wearied horse bounded swiftly over the hard road.

Suddenly I turned her head to a wall. I would go across the fields and cut them off. She leapt it violently, nearly unseating me, and still bounded on.

The meadows undulated smoothly. As we swept on the balmy night wind sang in my ears. Juno jumped another wall, and, coming to a halt, we waited ahead of them.

I swayed in my seat with the great shocks of my horse's heart, but my eyes were fixed upon the advancing carriage. The white manes of the animals were tossing in the wind.

Goldhurst was driving them very fast, and I could see Berthe's face, pale in the moonlight, and the billowy whiteness of her dress. I lifted my hand as they approached.

"Stop!" I called.

A startled cry from Berthe—an insolent glance from Goldhurst's pale eyes—they had whirled on.

"Stop!" I repeated.

I saw Goldhurst lean forward and snatch the whip from its socket. I heard him lash the horses; their already great speed increased; they were running away from me.

For a moment my brain reeled. Then my anger, flashing in my eyes, seemed to strew all the air with sparks. I did not realize how I looked and saw where I could head them off. I hardly remember wheeling and dashing across the space they were rounding—but in a moment I awaited them again, and, drawing my pistol, shot the nearest horse dead.

With a cry he leapt into the air, then tumbled headlong, dragging his companion with him, and the carriage was overturned.

I sprang to the ground. One of the horses lay

lifeless—the other struggled faintly in the harness. Goldhurst too was injured and bleeding. I went to the spot where Berthe lay, for she had been thrown out, and raised her. I carried her to the brook at the side of the road, and washed the dust from her face. I did not know whether she was living or not.

At length she opened her eyes, and I saw consciousness dawn into them. I released her, and let her sit upon the bank.

Then I went to the carriage. Goldhurst had fallen beneath it. With some difficulty I dragged him out. He was in great distress, and I saw was internally injured.

To my great satisfaction I heard a carriage approaching. It stopped—a voice inquired what had happened. I stated the case.

"This man was sloping with my ward. I shot one of his horses, the carriage was overturned, and he is hurt. I do not feel responsible for either him or his injuries, but if you will take him into your carriage and turn back to the hotel at the village I will send a physician to him."

The two men got out and took him into their vehicle. After they had driven away I unharnessed the living horse, getting him upon his feet for the purpose—took the pole out of the carriage, and at some disadvantage harnessed Juno to the phaeton and turned her head towards home. Without speaking to Berthe I assisted her to the cushions, and, silently, we returned to Redwood. I stopped on the way only to call at the house of a doctor and send him to the village.

During that drive I did not turn my eyes once upon Berthe's face. A gigantic indignation fought within me, yet I felt that I loved her. Every atom of her body and soul was dear to me. She sat crushed and silent. I felt her shrinking from me. It made my heart ache; yet, if I had opened my lips, I should have thundered such denunciations of her ingratitude that she would have believed I hated her. When we reached the terrace, and I lifted her from the carriage, she raised her eyes silently. As they rested on my white, set face she gave a little cry and vanished into the house.

I went to my chamber, but I could not sleep. A thousand doubts seemed ranking in my heart. Which- ever way I turned for relief, I yet thought of Berthe. Her face, in all its guises, I saw distinctly in the dark. She had not trusted; she had avoided—deceived me. I, who loved her with all loves fused into one, the very core of my heart her shrine—I had been cheated by her. I moiled at last and wept like a child.

I breakfasted in my library. I was not ready to see Berthe until later in the day. At length I sent for her.

It wrung my heart to see her exhausted with weeping—trembling and fearing me. She took the seat I gave her, never lifting her eyes to my face.

I went back and seated myself again at my writing-table.

"You wish to leave me, Berthe," I said, quietly. "I will not blame you for that, only I will make separation easier. I will go abroad again, and you can stay at Redwood."

Did I fancy it, or did a look of terror come over her downcast face? She sat as if frozen. Assuming that this arrangement was satisfactory to her, I passed on.

"I wish for your happiness, Berthe. Do you desire to marry Mr. Goldhurst?"

She shuddered. I waited for her to speak, but she did not.

"I wish you would treat me with confidence enough to tell me, Berthe. I wish to know for your own sake."

She wrung her hands.

"Do not—do not torture me so!" she cried.

I saw that she was acutely suffering.

"Oh, Berthe!" I groaned.

The next instant she had flung herself at my feet, her face bowed to the very floor. Such violent sobs shook her that I was terrified.

"Berthe," I said, "do not be so distressed. I cannot bear it. It hurts me worst of all to see you suffer."

"Oh, shut me up, starve me, kill me, only do not leave me," she sobbed.

I thought I could not have heard aright.

"Sit here by my side and talk with me," I said, raising her. "Give me your hand. You have no reason to fear me, Berthe. I only want to know your desires—how to make you happy, since I have failed before."

But my caresses seemed to sting her; she pushed me off, and started to her feet.

"If you had only loved me a little!" she cried. "What do you think I am made of? No one ever loved me—ever, ever! My mother—she did not love me, but she might have if she had lived. I have been so hungry for a little natural affection! But I

will not ask for it now—I will be satisfied with your charity, your kindness; only do not leave me here alone. I shall die!"

I was too amazed to speak.

"I never loved Mr. Goldhurst, but he said he loved me. No one ever said it before. It gave him a power over me. Oh, you do not know, you cannot understand—a man self-centred, cold, and intellectual, like you—what I have suffered during the long vacations, when I was a child at school, and no home to receive me! The other girls, happy, talked of their parents, brothers, and sisters, their sweet home life, from which they returned so happy and confident! I cannot remember when my heart did not ache. At length you sent for me. Oh, how I hoped you would love me a little, only a little! But your face was like marble in its cold surprise. I was not what you expected—or you expected and desired nothing. You were kind to me, but you were kind to everyone. Do you think I do not know the difference between love and kindness? But to be dear to some one—any one! I would marry a beggar who loved me, and follow him to the ends of the earth!"

"Berthe—"

"Hush, hear the rest. I was not sloping with Mr. Goldhurst last night; or, if I was, I did not know it. He came to drive with me for the last time—he said he was going abroad. And as we drove he asked me to go with him as his wife."

I shuddered at these words, and she, seeming wretched in her recital, sank into an arm-chair before me.

"I did not want to marry him, but it gave me a pang to think he was going away. He said that he loved me; it bewildered me, somehow; I think that I promised."

She seemed to recollect with an effort.

"When you came, on Juno, I cried out for him to stop. He whipped the horses; he uttered horrible oaths; I never heard anything before like them. I knew that he was running away with me, but I was helpless."

"Poor child!"

"And then—oh, then!—you would not speak to me!"

She buried her face in her hands. I found my senses then, and my voice.

"Berthe," I said, "as Heaven hears me, I love you. I have not understood you, but I have loved you day by day, purely, tenderly. Call me what you like—your father, your brother, your lover—no word will express my undying affection for you. In these last twelve hours I have suffered untold anguish; yet you know, Berthe, I have not been unkind when you seemed so. I would have done anything you required to secure your happiness. Dear as my home has grown to me, I was prepared to become again a wanderer if so your peace would be secured. Now it shall be as you say. Berthe, do we separate or remain for ever together?"

She stretched out her beautiful arms.

"Oh, keep me!" she sobbed.

The joy was worth the pain, and by-and-bye I made my revelation, that happiness was as new to me as to her.

In my content I could even forgive Goldhurst, though I was satisfied that his intentions had been most villainous. I went to see him, and found him a great sufferer. He lay ill at the village tavern for over a month. Meanwhile I supplied him with needful attendants, and, at length, on his recovery, received his confession and repentance in good part. He went abroad, and I never saw him again.

Berthe was ill for several weeks after her painful experience, but as soon as she was strong again we were quietly married. We made no wedding tour. All we wanted was the right to live for each other, and to be happy.

Now the world seems beautiful just for us. The robins sing, the roses blossom, the breezes blow at Redwood, and we are at peace with its peace.

E. S. K.

FACETIE.

A MARRIAGE is published in the Buffalo papers to which are affixed the words, "No cards, no no-sense."

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.—They had a concert in Salem recently in aid of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and thirty-seven persons rode at one time in a car drawn by only one horse, to attend it.

A YOUNG POSTIVIST.

Parson: "What's a miracle?"

Boy: "Dunno."

Parson: "Well, if the sun were to shine in the middle of the night, what would you say it was?"

Boy: "The moon."

Parson: "But if you were told it was the sun, what would you say it was?"

Boy: "A lie."

Parson: "I don't tell lies. Suppose I told you it was the sun; what would you say then?"

Boy: "That yer wasn't sober!"—Punch.

CARATS AND CARBON.—Among the diamonds lately found in the South African diggings there is said to have been one of as many as 154 carats. Orthography apart, this statement harmonizes with the supposition that the diamond is of vegetable origin.—Punch.

A MINOR CANNON.—The new 35-ton gun, or 700-pounder, is called *The Woolwich Infant*. Sweet innocent! Let us hope that affairs may allow it long to remain such. Is the Woolwich Infant supposed to be a boy or a girl? If a boy, it must be admitted that there was never yet before such a son of a gun.—Punch.

USEFUL AND RECREATIVE.—It was said that, in the town of Boston, the girls had made an improvement in ironing, which beat the steam-engine on common roads all hollow. They spread out all the clothes on a smooth platform, and fastened hot flat-irons to their feet, and skated over them. This was combining the recreative with the useful and ornamental.

PROBLEM FOR THE POET LAUREATE.—The knights of King Arthur's Round Table of course formed a circle when they sat round it. Tournaments in general used to come off in lists; but can the author of "The Last Tournament" inform a spiritualist whether, in a séance of Arthur's knights at table, there was ever any table-tilting?—Punch.

BLISS.—At a late wedding in Indiana the bride and bridegroom and sixteen of the guests were deaf and dumb. The sixteen guests should have paired off too, and then the whole lot might have come to England to contest for the Dunmow Flitch. Fancy nine married couples, who had never once had words with each other.—Fun.

COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

Squire (who interests himself with the moral and material condition of his peasantry): "Huile, Woodruff! what an eye you've got! How did you get that?"

Labourer: "Oh, it's nawthin' partic'lar, sir. 'Last night—at the 'White Art,' sir. But—in (in extenuation)—Christmas time, sir—on'y once a year!"—Punch.

SCIENCE FOR THE SEASON.—Sir Charles Lyell, according to a correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, is credited with the saying that there are three things necessary for a geologist: the first is to travel; the second is to travel; and the third, also, is to travel. This seems to mean that your geologist must travel, travel, travel over the face of the earth in order to be enabled to explore its interior. The earth is round; so is your plum-pudding: the earth has a crust; so has your plum-pie. Happily, conditions like those needful for the exploration of the earth do not delay analogous researches.—Punch.

RAILWAY REFORM.—At a meeting of railway directors, which will probably be held in the middle of next week, it will be resolved, in order to increase the safety of the public, that no pointsman, guard or engine-driver, shall ever be on duty much more than six and forty hours at a stretch; and that every such servant shall always, when on duty, be allowed at least four minutes, no less than three times daily, for enjoyment of his meals. With the like view of security, it will also be resolved that porters shall on branch lines be required to act as pointsmen, signallers, and ticket-clerks, and that due and timely notice of the changes in the time-tables shall on no account be furnished to the drivers of goods trains.—Punch.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

The closing night of the Christmas season is observed by every nation in Europe, except Switzerland, in which country the republican form of Government introduced by W. Tell (the first President) prevents the recognition of kings and queens.

Throughout England, particularly in those rural districts where the study of physics is yet in its infancy, great importance is attached to the weather on Twelfth Day. The occurrence of rain, or wind, or sleet, or snow, or hail, or the appearance of the Aurora Borealis over the roofs of the Bank of England is considered a most favourable augury, and in some counties determines the day on which the sowing of the spring wheat commences. But the slightest indication of the zodiacal light is dreaded as a sure forerunner of the turn-ply, and the connection of a parhelion with protracted drought is established by a long series of observations, reaching as far back as the Reformation.

Most lawyers are of opinion that under the provisions of an old Act of Parliament, still unrepealed, it is illegal to solicit a Christmas box after twelve o'clock on the 6th of January.

If Twelfth Night falls on a Sunday, the harvest will be late; if on a Monday, the back door should

be carefully looked to on the long evenings; if on a Tuesday, pilchards will be caught in enormous quantities; if on a Wednesday, the silkworms will suffer; if on a Thursday, there will be no skating on the Serpentine during the rest of the year; if on a Friday, the apple crop will be a failure; and if on a Saturday (as this year), you should on no account have your hair cut by a red-haired man who squints and has relations in the colonies. The sceptic and the latitudinarian may smile superciliously at these predictions, but they have been verified by inquiries conducted at centres as wide apart as Bury St. Edmunds, Rotherham, Dawlish, Bickmansworth, Kirksbright, and Cape Clear.—Punch.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT SEA.

THE holly bough is gleaming
With dark and prickly sheen,
The mistletoe betraying
Its tender white and green;
The Christmas tree, like fairy,
Holds strange, mysterious gifts;
And though the snow be lying
In deep and treacherous drifts,
Our English hearts are warming
Beneath their festive mirth,
For 'tis the blessed season
When good-will came on earth.
The season stirs our nature
In many mystic ways,
High tides of feeling rising
At thoughts of other days;
But while the bowl is brimming,
And when the feast is spread,
And when dear friends are meeting
And happy tears are shed,
I claim to be remembered
With cheers of three times three
The English hearts that muster
On Christmas Eve at Sea!

Where now 'tis chilly noontide,
Or balmy tropic night,
Or where the sun is beaming
In dancing lines of light;
Wherever floats our banner,
As if a path to cleave,
Be sure our English brothers
Remember Christmas Eve,
And think of all the friendships
Which absence shall not chill,
And household deep affections
More near the heart's core still!
Our soldiers and our sailors,
Who hold in England's name
The mightiest realm-connection
Which only she can claim;
The brave adventurers swarming
From out the parent hive,
Who seek with hum of labour
To do, to dare, and strive,
And 'mid their toil to waken
The wilds to English speech,
And glory in the future
Their sons may haply reach!

And women weak, who bravely—
Some earnest hope at stake—
At call of love or duty
The ocean pathway take;
Oh! sweet the spirit fire
That all in thought are near!
We feel their unseen presence
Their voices almost hear,
While fondly we remember,
With cheers of three times three,
The English hearts who muster
On Christmas Eve at Sea!

GEMS.

It is not easy to love those we do not esteem.
ZENO, of all virtues, made his choice of silence.
WITHOUT danger, danger cannot be surmounted.
So slow does laziness travel that poverty soon overtakes it.

The sunshine of good temper penetrates the gloomiest shades; beneath its cheering rays the miserable may bask, and forget all their misery.

THREE KINDS OF PRAISE.—There are three kinds of praise—that which we yield, that which we lend, and that which we pay. We yield it to the powerful from fear, we lend it to the weak from interest, and we pay it to the deserving from gratitude.

STATE OF TRADE IN PARIS.—"Things are bad," said a tradesman of the *Chausée d'Antin* to an English customer. "Why, sir, in 1869, I used to

take 6,000 francs a day. Yesterday I took 50 francs; and to-day, and it is now five o'clock in the afternoon, you are my first customer." This is a picture that speaks of the real condition of things in Paris more powerfully than a volume of comment.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

THE RUSSIAN WAY OF DRESSING CUCUMBERS.—The cucumber is sliced in the usual way. A few celery leaves must be previously chopped very fine, and mixed with a good quantity of the best oil, sufficient vinegar, pepper, and salt being added to give it the proper piquancy. This mode of dressing cucumber makes an agreeable change in summer to many palates. As the flavour of celery is very powerful, proper caution is requisite.

ROAST VEAL.—Season a breast of veal with pepper and salt; secure the sweetbread firmly in its place, flour the meat and roast it slowly before a moderate fire for about four hours; it should be of a fine brown, but not dry; baste it with butter. When done put the gravy in a stewpan, add a piece of butter rolled in browned flour, and if there should not be quite enough gravy add a little more water, with pepper and salt to the taste. The gravy should be brown.

STATISTICS.

ANCIENT RATES OF ARMY PAY.—At the present time, when the mass expenses of the army are the subject of consideration, it is interesting to refer to the following table of "rates for the entertainment of the officers appointed for the Service in the year 1588:—The Lieutenant-General of the Army, per day, 6*l.*; halberdiers, 1*l.* 10*s.*; the marshal of the field, 2*l.*; halberdiers, 15*s.*; the provost-marshal, 13*s.* 4*d.*; the jailer, 1*l.* 8*d.*; eight tipstaves (8*d.* each), 6*s.* 4*d.*; ten halberdiers at ditto, 6*s.* 8*d.*; the Captain-General of the Lancos, per day, 1*l.*; lieutenant, 10*s.*; guidon, 1*l.* 6*d.*; trumpet, 1*l.* 6*d.*; clerk, 1*l.* 6*d.*; surgeon, 1*l.* 6*d.*; ten halberdiers, at 8*d.* each, 6*s.* 8*d.*; the colonel of the footmen, per day, 2*l.*; lieutenant, 10*s.*; sergeant-major, 10*s.*; four corporals of the field, at 4*s.* each, 16*s.*; ten halberdiers, at 8*d.* each, 6*s.* 8*d.*; the treasurer-at-war, per day, 6*s.* 8*d.*; four clerks, at 2*s.* each, 8*s.*; ten halberdiers, at 8*d.* each, 6*s.* 8*d.*; the master of the ordnance, per day, 10*s.*; lieutenant, 6*s.* 8*d.*; inferior officers of the ordnance, per day (not stated); ten halberdiers, at (not stated); the master-master, per day, 6*s.* 8*d.*; four clerks, at 2*s.* each, 8*s.*; the commissary of the victuals, per day, 6*s.* 8*d.*; one clerk, 2*s.*; the trenchmaster, per day, 6*s.* 8*d.*; the master of the carriages, per day, 4*s.*; master cart-takers, the piece, per day (not stated); four clerks, at the piece (not stated); the quarter-master, per day, 10*s.*; six farriers, at the piece (not stated); the scout-master, per day, 6*s.* 8*d.*; two light-horse, at 1*l.* 4*d.* each, 2*s.* 8*d.*; the judge-general, per day, 2*s.* 8*d.*; the entertainment of the officers of the regiment, the colonel being a nobleman, 1*l.*; he being a knight or nobleman's son, 13*s.* 4*d.*; lieutenant-colonel, per day, 6*s.*"

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is said that an export duty on French wines shipped for England will be charged henceforth. Farewell Gladstone claret, and *élixir* port!

THE *dames de la halle* sent the Empress of Brazil a splendid bouquet, composed of white camellias. Her Majesty responded by sending 2,000 francs.

BISMARCK will not allow his troops to receive the paper money of France. They must be paid in gold and silver.

CENTENARIANS.—At Portonwell, Cornwall, a Miss Jenny Tiddy died the other day at the age of 100 years and nine months. The old woman stated that she had never known a day's illness until the Saturday before her death. An inhabitant of Camnor, Berks, named Betty Cooper, celebrated her 102nd birthday lately, when the village bells were rung in celebration of the event.

EXTRAORDINARY DISCOVERY OF A RING.—On the 28th of November last the "Mary Ann," fishing-smack, of Colchester, reports that the carcass of a bullock was picked up in the Swin, near the Spitway buoy, supposed to have been thrown overboard from one of the London cattle boats a few days previously. The carcass was opened for the purpose of getting a little fat for the rigging, and the crew were in the act of throwing it overboard again when a gold ring fell from the paunch, marked "Johanna Ulbers, 1869." The ring was transmitted to the Board of Trade authorities, in whose custody it remains, and they will eventually adjudicate as to whom the ornament belongs. If the owner can be found, it will, as a matter of course, be his, subject to the claim of salvage, which is one third of the value.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BOOKS RECEIVED.—The beautiful lines, "Christmas Eve at Sea," in the preceding page, from Mrs. Newton Croeland's "Diamond Wedding," published by Houlston and Sons, 63, Paternoster Row, will, at this season, find an echo in many hearts.

I. B.—The recent sale of the Imperial wines and spirits in Paris produced a total of 370,000*l*.

REUBEN.—Handwriting very good. Your lines are pretty, and, considering they are the result of your first attempt, they entitle you to commendation.

CONSERVATIVE.—Yes. From 1840 to 1860 Parliament always met on an earlier day in the new year than the date fixed for 1872—viz., the 6th of February.

H. J.—Lord Ellenborough enjoyed for many years a pension of 7,700*l*. per annum in consideration of his having held the abolished office of Chief Clerk of the Court of Queen's Bench.

D. O. F.—Perfectly clean the ivory from grease or dirt, soak for a few minutes in water slightly acidulated with aquafortis, then dye in an infusion of cochineal in liquor of ammonia, and you will achieve the desirable result of imparting a red dye to your ivory.

A. CONSTANT READER.—At Carmel, in Lancashire, the old parish umbrella is still preserved in the vestry of the parish church. It is made of leather, opens and shuts on a metal frame, and is about the size of a large carriage umbrella. Charges for mending it occur in the churchwarden's accounts at various times in the eighteenth century.

B. P.—The total amount raised by direct and indirect Local Taxation reckoned for the United Kingdom may be estimated at sixteen shillings a head of the entire population if equally divided, but four-fifths of the amount are raised in England and Wales; the amounts contributed by the three countries being, England and Wales, 30,550,000*l*.; Scotland, 2,000,000*l*.; and Ireland, 2,557,000*l*. Adding the Local to the General Taxation of the Kingdom, the average for each individual is raised to 3*l*. 1*s*. a head.

A. SUBSCRIBER.—After long research a test for sewage has been discovered, in which any person can test his water supply. About ten grains of pure white sugar are mixed with ten ounces of the water to be tested, and placed in a tall glass. This is then exposed to light. In a few hours, if sewage or other organic impurities are present, the liquid will become turbid, and a fungus will form, branching off in all directions. This simple test of impurity is well worthy of the attention of every household, for nothing is more dangerous to health than impure water.

CURIOS.—From the most careful observations it is estimated that one half of the human family, taking the whole world, die before they reach the age of fourteen years, and of this proportion something like one half in our large towns die before they reach ten years old. In some towns upwards of 50 per cent. of children die under one year old. On careful analysis it has been found that by far the greater proportion of this fatality arises from preventable causes—that is, from diseases owing to neglect of proper rules respecting food, air, clothing, and sanitary arrangements generally.

LIZIE.—For dyeing scarlet use magenta and yellow aniline dyes mixed, or the following cochineal and tin bath:—1*st*. Dissolve 1*lb*. of cream of tartar in water, quant. suff., boil in a black tin vessel, when dissolved add solution of tin (made by dissolving 2*oz*. grain tin in a mixture of 1*lb*. each of nitric acid and water, and 1*lb*. of sal ammoniac) 1*lb*., boil for three minutes, then boil the cloth for two hours, drain it, and let cool. 2*nd*. Boil 4*oz*. cream of tartar in water quant. suff., add 1*oz*. powdered cochineal, boil for five minutes, add 1*oz*. solution of tin, then dye the goods as quickly as possible. The quantities given are for 1*lb*. of woollen felt or cloth.

A. B.—From being in the Exhibition of Paris in 1867 the Krupp Gun was transferred to the field of battle by the Germans in 1870. It was nominally a 1,000-pounder, but was constructed to project a 1,212-pound shot, or a shell of 1,080 pounds. Its bore is 14 inches, and the length 17 feet. It took sixteen months, night and day, to make, and cost 15,750*l*. Krupp's works at Essen cover 450 acres of ground, and employ 8,000 men. They include 112 anvil and other furnaces, 185 steam engines, 49 steam hammers, 110 smiths' forges, and 318 lathes. Krupp can produce 9-inch guns at the rate of one per day.

A. WORKING MAN.—The subject was recently discussed at a meeting held at Cannon Street Hotel, convened for the purpose of considering the question of our reserve food supplies in the colonies, and to promote the popularization of tinned Australian meats. It was then men-

tioned that in the Australian and New Zealand colonies there are at the present time about 80,000,000 sheep and 5,800,000 cattle. It is calculated that one-fourth of this enormous aggregate should be available annually as surplus stock, to be slain for food. This, at 50*lb*. weight per sheep, and 700*lb*. per bullock, would give about 750,000 tons weight of animal food. If these were disposed of in England at 6*d*. per pound it would represent a trade of nearly 42,000,000*l*. Yet, fabulous as these figures may seem, this vast supply would only represent about one pound of meat per head per week for the population of the United Kingdom.

GEORGE.—In your endeavour to remove ink from paper you should be cautious in the application of corrosive acids. Muriatic, sulphuric, citric, and oxalic acid (salt of sorrel is frequently recommended) have all been tried, but neither of them has been found so innocuous or thoroughly effective in its action upon ordinary inks as a strong solution of chloride of lime. This should be obtained in small quantities (say an ounce) at a time, freshly made, and be kept in a well-stopped bottle round which dark-coloured paper should be pasted to exclude light. When used the stopper should not be taken out, but sufficiently removed to allow a drop or two to fall on the spot where required. A few seconds will suffice if the ink is fresh, but if it has permeated the paper to any extent two or three successive applications may be necessary, each previous application to be carefully taken up with blotting-paper. The solution should be liberally applied, and flooded (not rubbed) on the part.

THE HUSBAND'S CONFESSION:

You told me not till we were wed
How deep is woman's love;
Your heart was folded in your breast
Like, in its nest, the dove;
And though your eyes were ever bright,
Your lips sweet as a rose,
I knew not till our wedding-day
How strong affection grows.

We whispered love on summer eves,
And in the winter time;
Our lives flowed smoothly, sweetly on,
Like pure and perfect rhyme;
We pledged our faith when autumn came
Crowned with her golden sheaves,
And plighted vows anew when spring
To being 'woke the leaves.

Kind words were ever on your lips,
Like beauty on a rose;
In trouble's long and darksome hour
They brought me sweet repose.
In love your hand passed o'er my brow,
And blushed all my care,
And tears of goodness from your eyes
O'erwhelmed my deep despair.

Now we are wed, and in our hearts
Love's flowers ripe have grown;
No longer in the path of fate
We walk apart, alone;
The tie that makes our two hearts one
Can never sever I be;
One common hope is ours, one joy,
One common destiny.

C. D.

G. A. T.—In all about seven hundred comets have been observed. Of these only the more brilliant possess tails. But nearly all comets show, during their approach to the sun, a certain lengthening of their figure corresponding to the change which in the case of larger comets precedes the formation of a tail; so that a tail may be considered the natural appendage of a comet, but varying according to special conditions requisite for its production. In all cases where a tail appears it is evident as being the extension of part of the head known as the coma or hair, that is, the fainter light surrounding the nucleus of the comet, and no comet has been observed without showing a coma during one or other period of its existence.

ADOLPHUS. twenty-one, tall, fair, and gentlemanly. Respondent must be pretty, and ladylike.

FELIX W. twenty-seven, dark, good looking, and fond of home.

LEAH. seventeen, 5*ft*. 2*in*., pretty, lively, and amiable. Respondent must be respectable.

MIRNIE. tall, dark hair and eyes, well educated, and affectionate.

CHARLETON. twenty-one, an engineer, and with good prospects.

DARREL. twenty, fair, and a clerk in a lawyer's office. Respondent must be dark, young, and pretty.

DIGBY. eighteen, tall, fair, and handsome. Respondent must be about the same age.

METRON. twenty-two, 5*ft*. 4*in*., light hair, domesticated, and respectable. Respondent must be twenty, and good looking.

ARTHUR. nineteen, medium height, fair, has a small income, but good expectations. Would like a dark young lady.

NELLY W. just on eighteen, tall, thin, fair hair, dark eyes, pretty, good tempered, has plenty of spirit, and fond of home.

MARIEA. twenty-four, a brunette, tall, graceful, and can play and sing. Respondent must be tall, dark, and a tradesman.

MARGARET RAYMOND. nineteen, 5*ft*. 2*in*., fair hair, blue eyes, and loving. Respondent must be tall, dark, and a clerk.

ROSSE. twenty-two, 5*ft*. 8*in*., light hair and eyes, black curly whiskers, good looking, and has a manly appearance. Respondent must understand housekeeping.

EMMA P. nineteen, tall, a blonde, rather pretty, lively, thoroughly domesticated, but has no money. Respondent must be tall, dark, steady, and respectable.

EMILY and MARIEA. "Emily," nineteen, black hair, blue eyes, fond of home, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be tall, fair, of a kind and loving disposition, and a mechanic. "Mariea," eighteen, brown

curly hair, blue eyes, lively disposition, fond of dancing, and will have 100*l*. on her wedding-day. Respondent must be tall, dark, good looking, steady, and have some money.

CHARLIE. thirty-five, short, dark hair, and dark grey eyes. Respondent must be short, stout, and good looking.

LAUGHING JOHNNY. eighteen, fond of singing and dancing, industrious, and good tempered. Would like respondent to be same age.

C. D. twenty-three, lively disposition, fond of music, and good looking. Respondent must be fair, good tempered, fond of home, and not more than eighteen.

CARRIE. thirty, 5*ft*. 6*in*., dark, thin, handsome, with bushy black beard, whiskers, and moustaches, is tired of single blessedness, and would like to meet with a loving partner.

MONTREVOR. twenty-five, a widower, light blue eyes, auburn hair, steady, industrious, and a member of the Church of England. Would like respondent to be sensible, affectionate, and a Protestant.

ALBINA. twenty-six, tall, dark, handsome, an Italian, is a Protestant, and a tradesman. Respondent must be good looking, about the same age, and have good expectations.

COLIN C. twenty, tall, fair hair and eyes, well built, and tolerably good looking. Respondent must be fair, tall, pretty, domesticated, fond of music, and a country lass preferred.

AN IRISHMAN. thirty-two, 5*ft*. 8*in*., with moustache and whiskers, an income of about 200*l*. Respondent must be about twenty-five, fair, amiable, and very domesticated.

HARRY D. twenty-two, short, dark eyes, fair complexion, well educated, fond of music and the drama, but partial to the comforts of home. Respondent must be fair, not too tall, and intelligent.

W. M. tall, slim, fair, dark hair and eyes, and considered handsome by his friends. Respondent must be moderately good looking, domesticated, and possess a little money.

LIZIE N. twenty-one, short, inclined to be stout, dark, a good cook and housekeeper, a tendency to be frolicsome, and has no money, but would be true and constant. Respondent must be handsome.

HUGH BROWN. nineteen, medium height, florid complexion, can speak French, is a tolerable musician, and has a slight knowledge of chemistry. Respondent must be fair, intelligent, fond of home, and of a cheerful disposition.

BOSS and ADA.—"Boss," fair, dark eyes, brown hair, very pretty, and good tempered. Respondent must be dark, and a tradesman. "Ada," fair, blue eyes, dark hair, and considered very witty. Respondent must be good tempered.

LABURNUM. twenty-eight, 5*ft*. 6*in*., a Scotch gentleman, blue eyes, dark brown hair, with large whiskers, beard, and moustache. Respondent must not be more than thirty, of genteel appearance, amiable, and possess property.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

PETIT PAUL is responded to by—"Maud Amy," twenty-one, 5*ft*. 4*in*., fair, dark hazel eyes, pretty, good tempered, fond of home, musical, loving, and domesticated; and—"Petite Emmy," eighteen, a fair and very pretty English girl, with blue eyes and natural golden hair, well educated, healthy, and loving.

TWO SCOTCH LADIES by—"Two Irish Lassies," of a loving, obsequious disposition; one is twenty, medium height, brown hair, and hazel eyes; the other is twenty, 5*ft*. 6*in*., brown hair, and blue eyes.

PEACH BLOSSOM by—"Fred," nineteen, tall, affectionate, well educated, clever, gentlemanly, in a good position, dark, and good looking—"Edward," twenty-three, 5*ft*. 9*in*., dark brown hair, whiskers, and moustache, affectionate, fond of home, and musical; and—"Richard," eighteen, tall, dark complexion, good looking, fond of reading, amiable, kind, good tempered, and merry.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 34, Strand, by SIDNEY A. SMITH.